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World Player of the Decade

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EXCLUSIVE: "My Inter mission"

2009 AWARDS SPECIAL ISSUE

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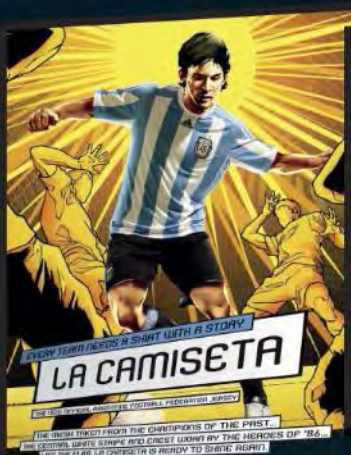

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January 2010

The World Cup draw in Cape Town may have presented a rose-tinted view of football to the world, but all around there are signs that the game's credibility is being undermined from within.

Henry's handball in Paris; the violence before and after the Algeria-Egypt World Cup qualifiers; a match-fixing scandal in Germany that threatens to be European football's biggest corruption case: all are stories which cannot be ignored.

Hopefully our coverage of the above events has not distracted from our preview of the African Nations Cup, which kicks off in early January – which is slightly earlier than in previous years as a compromise to the European clubs who now employ so many African stars.

And not forgetting the *World Soccer* awards, the longest-running of their kind anywhere in the world and now in their 28th year. Lionel Messi's award as the world's best player over the past 12 months may have been widely anticipated, but that does not diminish his achievement.

Please let us know your thoughts on the award to Ronaldinho as our World Player of the Decade, based on your votes in our annual polls over the past decade.

All of the above means we are free to kick off our World Cup countdown in earnest next month. Don't miss part one of our 32-team guide to South Africa 2010, presented free with the February issue.

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com

CONTRIBUTORS

African correspondent Mark Gleeson will be in Angola for the African Nations Cup. He previews the teams, page 94.

Canadian writer Declan Hill is the author of *The Fix: Soccer and Organized Crime*, available in the UK via amazon.com

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SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER ON PAGE 58

...IN PICTURES

The global game caught on camera

Long arm of the law...Cerro Porteno's players are herded back down the tunnel by baton-wielding Brazilian police after the Paraguayans scuffled with their Fluminense hosts in the Sudamericana Cup.

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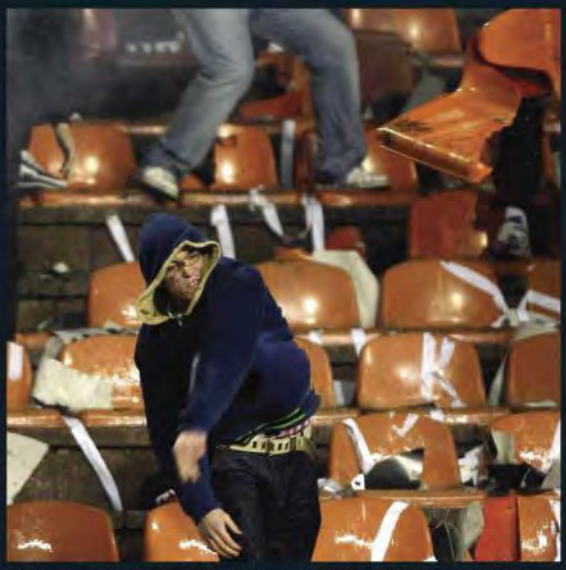
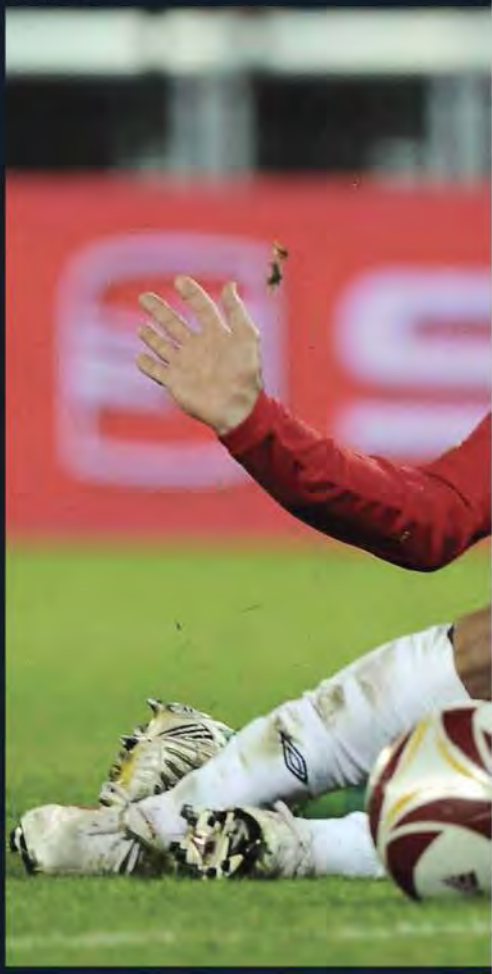


Serbian missle...a seat is thrown during the Belgrade derby between Red Star and Partizan

Horror...Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Gregory Coupet breaks an ankle against Auxerre

Welcome home...Samuel Eto'o returns to Barcelona's Camp Nou with Internazionale



Danger...Marc Stein of Hertha Berlin tries to make eye contact with Heerenveen's Oussama Assaidi

Anger...just imagine how livid Ireland's Keith Andrews and Richard Dunne (in green, left and right) were with France *after* Thierry Henry's handball

Rapid pain...Walid Badir of Hapoel Tel Aviv (left) and Rapid Wien's Yasin Pehlivan give everything they've got in their Europa League clash

Brian Glanville

... Alex Ferguson in trouble...Diego Maradona in the wars again...but both outstripped by Thierry Henry's handball

Hand of Gaul...Henry (no12) sets up William Gallas (no5) to score the goal which ended Ireland's World Cup dreams

THIERRY Henry's ignominious handball in Paris was another injustice to the Irish, you must truly say. A vast one. But what now? The overwhelming cry is for the use of technology, though the odd voice crying in the wilderness suggests elaborate moral challenge to supposed sinners, whose confessions, or the lack of them, will decide their fate. Technology itself has its own problems and would undermine the authority and confidence of referees.

But surely no World Cup goal could ever be so blatant as Diego Maradona's own "Hand of God" against England in Mexico City in the Azteca Stadium in 1986, though, even here, there are some who would disagree. But certainly Maradona's absurd justification that this was a revenge for England's victory in the Falklands War was no more than an impudent afterthought.

It has, meanwhile, been pointed out here and there that Henry, great player though he be, has hardly been a paragon of virtue. And all that self-abasement after the Ireland game has hardly absolved him. His long and dazzling career, in fact, has been littered with episodes of gamesmanship. One of the worst actually took place in the 2006 World Cup finals. France were playing Spain when, out on the right, Henry, challenged by the Spain centre-back, Carles Puyol, suddenly clapped his hand to his face and fell dramatically to the ground as if Puyol had hit him. He hadn't, but it got France a vital free-kick and a goal which enabled them to win.

> "All that self-abasement has hardly absolved Henry, whose career has been littered with episodes of gamesmanship"

It may seem a banal thing to say, but if Henry's handball had taken place in a less crucial game, we would have heard relatively little about it. It was, you might say, a sin – but a sin which has been magnified to huge proportions. And the French themselves countered that Ireland were given a non-existent penalty which enabled them to beat Georgia in a previous group game.

AS for the ever arrogant, never repentant Alex Ferguson, he has been running all too true to form. Far from being relieved by the relatively light nature of his punishment for grossly traducing the referee Alan Wiley, he has ignored the fact that a two-match touchline ban, with two more suspended, and a £20,000 fine hardly constitutes condign punishment. His insistence that Wiley was not fit enough to referee, when it turned out that he was fitter than four of Ferguson's own players, was outrageous and probably libellous. So thought the head of the refereeing body, one Alan Leighton,

Frenzy...Ferguson vents his spleen at Wiley

who urged legal action. Prominent former referee Graham Poll was equally incensed, though there were those in the press who strongly backed Fergie's cause.

Then what should Fergie shamelessly do but assure Mr Wiley that he would be happy to have him referee Manchester United again! Does he pick the referees too? Nor was this all. Insult was surely added to injury when Ferguson then announced that United had previously been maltreated by the referee Martin Atkinson. When playing Chelsea, Atkinson gave no foul when Didier Drogba hauled down United defender West Brown, thus enabling John Terry to score and Chelsea to win.

All in all, Fergie is a defiant as well as a remarkable manager. He still won't talk to BBC television after a documentary which he felt, though others – including myself – didn't, was unfair. And then there was a torrid occasion when the blameless BBC commentator John Motson, simply obeying instructions from base through his headphones, asked him after a match whether the sent-off Roy Keane would be punished. This unleashed a volley of foul-mouthed abuse which Ferguson insisted should not be shown, though other channels broadcast it later.

The fact is he seems to intimidate authority. It is palpably absurd that he will never attend a post-match press conference in the Premier League. Perhaps the legalities of the situation mean that in the last analysis he is not obliged to; but every other manager does. It is a different matter in the European Cup when he willingly speaks a couple of times to ITV.

Perhaps one of his greatest achievements was his shrewd and sensitive handling of one of United's most refulgent stars, Eric Cantona. Highly intelligent, technically splendid, original to a degree but sporadically violent and always his own defiant person, Cantona had come to England after insulting, face to face, the whole French international committee. Howard Wilkinson brought him to Leeds United shrewdly enough, and in the end Ferguson picked him up as a bargain and showed the most acute psychological insight.

Surely also worth mentioning of Ferguson are his triumphs in Scotland with Aberdeen, a secondary club when he took it over but one which he built into a side so powerful that it not only displaced the ever-dominant Celtic and Rangers as Scotland's premier side but even beat mighty Real Madrid in the Final of the 1983 European Cup-winners Cup.

You may not find him an endearing character, but his major talents as a manager are impossible to deny.

MARADONA? The eternal Buenos Aires street urchin and one of the greatest players the game has ever produced; a glorious, if ultimately destructive and deeply self-destructive, World Cup star; a cocaine addict, as he became in Naples, where they worshipped him.

Utterly and palpably the wrong man to appoint to an international managership. Yet that, in his supreme folly, was what Julio Grondona, the

Torrent of abuse...Maradona

supreme eminence of Argentinian football did. And this on top of Diego's temperament and even though his managerial experience was virtually nil.

His World Cup qualifying campaign was, of course, so nearly disastrous. The 6-1 defeat of a criminally unprepared team on the breathless heights of La Paz by humble Bolivia was followed by defeat at home in Rosario, with three goals conceded, to the old foe Brazil, before a breathless survival, with plenty of luck, in the last two games, against Peru and Uruguay – after which Maradona far surpassed Ferguson with his torrent of vile abuse of the journalists who had criticised him.

And Grondona, who gutlessly had failed to get rid of him even after those earlier results, still kept him suicidally in office. So in Argentina it goes. Crazily and contemptibly.

Maradona, is an Argentinian – even global – icon for what he did so resplendently as a player. Alas, as a coach he is no Franz Beckenbauer, not even a Michel Platini, and Grondona should have known it from the start. ●

GOALS
WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN...

We love that...Yadin (26) gets his team-mates' acclaim

1 Avihai Yadin, Hapoel Tel Aviv v Rapid Wien
A dipping, swerving shot from 40 yards into the top corner

2 Yves Desmarets, Vitoria Guimaraes v Sporting Braga
Meets an inch-perfect cross with a left-foot volley from an acute angle

3 Pedro Rodriguez, Barcelona v Real Mallorca
A sublime backheel from Zlatan Ibrahimovic takes out three Mallorca defenders, leaving Pedro to do the easy bit

4 Pedro Rodriguez, Barcelona v Internazionale
Another one for Pedro as he gets on the end of some neat passing to volley Barca's second of the game

5 Nawaf Al Abed, Al Hilal v Al Shoalah
A stunning shot direct from kick-off, with just four seconds on the clock in this Saudi Arabian cup clash

6 David Albelda, Valencia v Osasuna
An exquisite chip from 20 yards over the keeper's head

AND TWO TO FORGET...

Soslan Dzhanayev, Spartak Moscow v Krylya Sovetov & Spartak Moscow v CSKA Moscow
The goalkeeper drops the ball over the line from a harmless free-kick against Krylya. Then, two weeks later, he does it again, this time from a long-range shot by Tomas Necid with two minutes left that gave CSKA a 3-2 win and ended Spartak's title

To see clips of these goals, visit www.worldsoccer.com

NUMBERS GAME

€200million
the buy-out clause in Andres Iniesta's new Barcelona contract, which ties him to the club until 2015

100
caps reached by goalkeepers Iker Casillas of Spain and Italy's Gianluigi Buffon, against Argentina and Holland respectively

158
caps won by Latvia's Vitalijs Astafjevs following his appearance against Honduras, making him Europe's most-capped player

46,011
spectators at the 2009 MLS Cup Final between Los Angeles Galaxy and Real Salt Lake

£70million
money spent on agents by Premier League clubs in 2009

8
games played by New Zealand to reach the 2010 World Cup finals – against New Caledonia, Fiji, Vanuatu and Bahrain

5
minutes of injury time played before Emad Moteab scored for Egypt against Algeria in Cairo to force a special World Cup play-off

4
times Senol Gunes has been appointed coach of Trabzonspor, after he returned in December

REPORTS we couldn't make up

On the lash...Worgu was convicted of drinking in an area where alcohol is illegal

Cautionary tail...cat earned keeper a card

STRIKER FLOGGED
Nigerian star Stephen Worgu was sentenced to receive 40 lashes after being convicted of drinking alcohol in Sudan.

Worgu plays for the Sudanese club Al Merreikh, who are based in Omdurman in northern Sudan, a Muslim region where alcohol is illegal.

Last year, Worgu was bought by Al Merreikh for £1.5million from Enyimba of Nigeria in one of the biggest transfers in African football history.

PAWS FOR THOUGHT
Medjimurje goalkeeper Ivan Banovic thought he had performed a good deed during his team's 1-0 Croatian league defeat at Sibenik.

Midway through the match, a cat strayed onto the pitch, prompting Banovic to pick up the disorientated moggie and carry it off to the stands, where he allowed it to escape.

He received a warm round of applause from fans for his act of kindness – but a booking from the referee for leaving the pitch without permission.

Catch of the day...Terry

BACK OF THE NET
England captain John Terry was outed as an angler last month by *World Soccer*'s sister magazine, *Angler's Mail*. Terry was introduced to fishing by Fulham striker Bobby Zamora, who used to play in the same boys' team.

RUMOURS we'd like to believe

- Anxious to bring in a defensive midfielder, Fiorentina hope to arrange the loan of Real Madrid's little-used Argentinian Fernando Gago until the end of the season.

Surplus...Gago

- Russian sources claim CSKA Moscow's highly-rated Serb midfielder Milos Krasic is bound for Milan.
- Usually with its finger on the pulse at Camp Nou, the Barcelona daily *Sport* suggest Arsenal may make a bid for the European champions young attacker Jeffren Suarez.
- *France Football* reveals that after a bust-up with his Marseille coach Didier Deschamps, temperamental creator Hatem Ben Arfa is headed for the exit, destination Lille, Stuttgart or Portsmouth.

Wanted...Krasic

Paul Gardner

Let's hear from the referees

IF THE English Football Association's Respect campaign had a slogan, it might well be: "Let's hear it for the referees!" Well, I have a better idea, and a better slogan: "Let's hear it FROM the referees!"

Let's hear what the referees think on matters that greatly affect how they do their jobs and – given their prominence in the football picture – how they are able to live their lives.

We really do have an absurd situation here. To take the obvious example: the use of video technology as an aid to referee performance. A topic that, following Thierry Henry's activities, is being subjected to a good deal of scrutiny.

We know FIFA's – that is, Sepp Blatter's – opinion on the matter: a negative opinion of almost medieval obscurantism that virtually rules out even any discussion of the matter. And we've heard from plenty of coaches on the issue.

But what do the referees themselves think? Well, we simply don't know. Is it possible that a majority of referees – even a large majority – would welcome the use of replays? I think it is quite possible, but we don't know. They're never heard from.

What's more, we don't really know who "the referees" are. In dealing with this particular topic, one that involves sophisticated electronic equipment, we're talking only about the top referees – and that is a group that we can identify quite easily. They are the FIFA referees. Quite a sizeable group, actually, some 2,100 of them.

Disregarding the rather suspect method by which these referees are selected, they can be regarded as the profession's elite. But they are never heard from.

Nor, under the current set-up, are they likely to be heard from – certainly not if expressing a view that runs counter to FIFA's wishes. Referees have no voice because they have no professional body of their own. Other professions – doctors and lawyers, for example – have prestigious independent controlling bodies that license their members, set standards and exert disciplinary control. Importantly, they are in a position to speak for their members.

But referees do not have a representative body. One might imagine FIFA's Referees' Committee would speak for them, but as FIFA is the chief controller, if not employer of referees, that makes little sense.

Assuming that all of the elite referees have, as the aimed-for climax of their career, assignment to international games, then their future is always in the hands of soccer officialdom – either their national federation, their confederation or FIFA.

What chance of advancement up the refereeing ladder would there be for a guy who publicly let it be known that he thought Blatter had got it all wrong and that video replays during games should be introduced at once?

Think of recent cases where replays would have helped. Say, Eduardo's alleged diving, the "goal" that was awarded to Reading even though the ball passed outside the post, and now Thierry Henry. Is it not at least likely that one or more of the referees involved would have welcomed video evidence? Yet none of them – not Manuel Gonzalez, not Stuart Attwell, not Martin Hansson – even brought the subject up. England's Howard Webb is a commendable exception, having voiced support for video evidence while at the same time agreeing that Michel Platini's extra officials is a viable solution.

"It's time we found out what the officials think about introducing video technology"

That is the subservient position of referees: to do what they're told by their bosses – ultimately FIFA – and not to speak up, other than proffering the occasional abject apology when they get things wrong.

Nothing doing...ref Hansson rejects Irish appeals over Henry's handball in Paris

I have some experience of sounding out referee opinions. For many years now I have discussed with top referees in the United States the advisability of footballers always (and not just in international games) wearing numbers on the front of their shirts as well as the back. The response has invariably been positive. The suggestion is seen as an idea that would help referees in quick and positive identification of miscreants. It would also get rid of that embarrassing moment when a referee orders a player to turn his back to show his number.

But the obvious next stage – a letter from these referees to the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) backing the idea, and maybe suggesting that it be required in the MLS, has never happened. The referees have proved to be anything but proactive.

Why would that be? Because they are licensed by the USSF; because their job assignments depend on the USSF. Some of them, the top referee administrators, work for the USSF. I can only assume that coming up with ideas is seen as disruptive and that no one wants to rock the boat.

But this self-imposed censorship is unhealthy. Not least because it allows the soccer authorities, from FIFA down, to simply ignore the referees. According to former FIFA referee Graham Poll, the FA, in preparing the Respect campaign, said "they'd researched the opinions of 11,000 people, but they didn't ask one of the top referees for their views. Referees are the spearhead of it and yet they didn't even get consulted".

Some kind of professional global body for referees is necessary, a body that can – to take the immediate example – conduct a poll of its members (sadly, it would probably have to be a secret poll) and tell us what percentage approve of video evidence. ●

Jim Holden

Time to expose the cheats

THE FIERCE PUBLIC and media reaction to Thierry Henry's infamous handball moment that helped France qualify for this summer's World Cup finals was provoked by several factors.

One was the timing and the importance of the match – extra time in a World Cup play-off. Secondly, there was the brilliance and status of the player: Henry is a former World Cup winner, one of the great footballers of his generation and a man who has long traded on a reputation for grace and dignity.

Equally important, however, perhaps even more so, was the nature of the offence itself: handball. In fact, a calculated double handball that allowed Henry to control a cross spinning out of play and then pass for William Gallas to score the decisive goal against the Republic of Ireland.

The game is football; its first principle is that handling the ball is outlawed. That dictates everything about how the sport is played. Handle the ball – in doing so claiming one of the greatest prizes – and you strike a blow at the very heart of football.

That's why Diego Maradona's "Hand of God" goal in the 1986 World Cup quarter-final for Argentina against England created such anger.

Of course, there are more despicable acts in football – the deliberately reckless tackle that breaks an opponent's leg, the elbow smashed in the face of a rival player.

But those cases still won't shock and outrage the world like the Maradona and Henry handballs.

The day after the Henry incident, there was nothing else sporting people were talking about. Everybody had a view; well, everyone except FIFA. The initial response of the world's governing body was laughable and grossly insulting.

The match report on the official FIFA website did not mention the handball, trying to pretend the clearest case of cheating in many years had simply not happened. Eventually, this was amended after a deluge of public protests, but the pathetic charade had made FIFA look absurd in the modern information age.

Fair play...does FIFA's campaign fall on deaf ears too often?

FIFA subsequently refused to consider the possibility of a replay that was demanded by the Irish FA and a French government minister, and also suggested by Henry himself – once the player had been struck by a tidal wave of criticism. An unnamed spokesman – how bad is that for a global organisation? – explained it would cause chaos to allow a replay because it would set a precedent that would lead to hundreds of future demands for a re-match to a game decided by a controversial incident.

That's understandable, but wrong. In rare cases in the past, a team that has profited from cheating has volunteered a replay – as Arsenal did in an FA Cup tie a few years ago.

This was a course of action that the French federation, to its shame, would not countenance. It was content, like so many people in football these days, to take refuge in the widespread culture of cheating, to blame the referee for missing the incident and to selfishly accept the rewards of a blatant injustice.

Fair play? Why do that when nobody else would? Even the Ireland players refused to blame Henry personally – living and losing by the professional footballer's code of dishonour.

The challenge for football, and for FIFA specifically, in the wake of the Henry affair, is to properly attack the culture of cheating.

For years FIFA has treated us to the sham of a public campaign for fair play that has no punitive teeth to back it up. That must change. The rogues on the pitch must be hounded out.

> "The challenge for football, and for FIFA specifically, in the wake of the Henry affair, is to properly attack the culture of cheating"

Hand of Gaul...Henry has apologised for his blatant handball

I agree with FIFA that using video technology during matches would be a nightmare, creating far more problems than it might solve. But TV replays should, and must, be used for retrospective punishment of players who have obviously cheated, whether or not it is seen at the time by the match referee.

There would be a clear and strong set of sanctions for all offences – from physical assault, to feigning injury, to diving, to a handball like Henry's.

When players know in advance that they will receive a long ban if cameras expose their violence or their deception, then the culture of cheating will begin to wither. It will wither because of public contempt, and because managers and team-mates will not tolerate self-inflicted long suspensions for key players.

This is a battle that won't be won in a day, a week or a month. But give it a couple of years of concerted scrutiny and punishment, and the change in the mentality of the way football is played would be dramatic – and totally for the good of the game. ●

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HEROES...

ANTAR YAHIA
The Algeria defender scored the only goal – a thundering volley – in the World Cup play-off against Egypt in Khartoum, to send his country through to the finals.

ARMAND TRAORE
The Arsenal left-back will undergo surgery in the summer to remove his tattoos. He says religion is the reason behind his decision after embracing the Muslim faith.

Faith...Traore

WIGAN ATHLETIC
The Premier League club's players offered to refund all of their fans who travelled to the 9-1 hammering away at Tottenham Hotspur.

HARIS SEFEROVIC
The Bosnia-born teenager scored the winning goal as Switzerland beat hosts Nigeria to win the Under-17 World Cup, their first-ever world title.

Swiss hero...Seferovic

& VILLAINS

THIERRY HENRY
Who else? The most infamous handball since Diego Maradona's "Hand of God".

MICHELE MARCONI,
The Atalanta striker, on loan at third-tier Lumezzane, scored the only goal of the game as the minnows knocked their Serie A neighbours out of the Italian Cup.

AMIR ZAKI
Zamalek's Egyptian international striker claimed on his website that he would never join Premier League side Portsmouth because he would be unwilling to link up with their coach Avram Grant and defender Tal Ben Haim, who are Israelis, as well as Algeria's Nadir Belhadj.

No to Portsmouth...Zaki

Red hot...Olympiakos fans celebrate a goal in the 2-0 victory over Panathinaikos

OLYMPIAKOS SUPPORTERS
Panathinaikos goalkeeper Alexandros Tzorvas claimed he was hit by airgun pellets fired from the stands during a highly-charged Athens derby.

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13 STORIES YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

ENGLAND
Messi claims *World Soccer* top prize

Lionel Messi was voted 2009 World Player of the Year in the annual *World Soccer* awards. More, page 50

FRANCE
Henry faces global condemnation

Thierry Henry was condemned as a cheat after his handball helped France to beat the Republic of Ireland in a World Cup play-off. More, page 60

UNITED STATES
Salt Lake spoil LA story

Real Salt Lake beat LA Galaxy on penalties to win the 2009 Major League Soccer Cup Final in Seattle. More, page 89

SPAIN
Zlatan goal wins *clasico*

Barcelona beat Real Madrid 1-0 thanks to a goal from Sweden striker Ibrahimovic. More, page 38

URUGUAY
La Celeste book final place

The national side became the last team to qualify for the World Cup finals after beating Costa Rica in a two-legged play-off. More, page 60

SOUTH AFRICA
Luck of the draw

The World Cup hosts were handed a tough opening-round group, paired with France, Mexico and Uruguay. More, page 24

GERMANY
Enke's death stuns nation
The suicide of Hannover keeper Robert Enke sent the whole country into mourning. More, page 18

RUSSIA
Rubin dazzle again
Rubin Kazan became the first club from outside Moscow to retain the Russian league title. More, page 91

GERMANY
'The tip of the iceberg'
The unfolding match-fixing scandal threatens to be European football's biggest corruption case. More, page 26

SUDAN
Mother of all qualifiers
Algeria stunned Egypt in a World Cup play-off played in Khartoum after the two teams could not be separated in their qualifying group. More, page 34

NIGERIA
Swiss celebrate Under-17 triumph
Switzerland beat hosts Nigeria to win the Under-17 World Cup, their first-ever world title. More, page 42

NEW ZEALAND
Kiwis reach the finals
New Zealand beat Bahrain in a two-legged Asia-Oceania play-off to qualify for the World Cup for the first time for 28 years. More, pages 20 and 60

ANGOLA
All eyes on Angola
The 2010 African Nations Cup kicks off in Angola in January. More, pages 43 and 94

Robert Enke
Nationwide grief after suicide of keeper

GERMANY

Mourning...Hannover fans lit candles outside their team's home stadium

Memory...Ballack stands before his team-mate's shirt prior to a friendly in Gelsenkirchen

THE TEARS OF national team general manager Oliver Bierhoff; the 35,000 sorrow-stained faces at the memorial service; the numerous volumes of the book of condolence; and the sea of candles, flowers and shirts left at the gates of his home ground.

Germany reacted with disbelief, grief and a tidal wave of raw emotion on hearing the news that 32-year-old *Nationalmannschaft* and Hannover goalkeeper Robert Enke had taken his own life; the victim of a long, losing battle with depression.

Enke, a racing certainty to be one of his country's three keepers at this summer's World Cup finals, showed no sign of being troubled during a Tuesday morning training session. But he certainly was, and after driving to a railway crossing close to the farmhouse he shared with his wife, Teresa, and eight-month-old adopted daughter Leila, he lay down in the path of a train, shortly before 6pm.

Although the locomotive's two drivers saw him, there was no time to apply the brakes and Enke was killed instantly; a shockingly premature end to a life on earth and to an outstanding career.

After starting out with home-town club Carl Zeiss Jena, he went on to star for Borussia Monchengladbach and Benfica, and endured short but not-so-sweet spells at Barcelona, Fenerbahce and Tenerife before returning to the Bundesliga in the summer of 2004 to play for Hannover.

It turned out to be a match made in heaven. Supporters loved his brilliance between the posts and his everyman persona, while he thought as highly of them, never refusing a request for an autograph and always having time for a chat. An animal lover who had no fewer than eight dogs – all strays he rescued during his time in Portugal and Spain – he was the antithesis of today's fast-living, celebrity-obsessed professional footballer.

Within hours of his death, his agent and friend, Jorg Neblung, confirmed it was suicide and police revealed a farewell note had been found in his abandoned car. In it, Enke spelled out his despair, how he saw no alternative and apologised to his wife for the heartache caused and for the deception involved in his last, desperate act.

The next day, Teresa Enke courageously told a press conference that her husband had been treated by a psychologist for depression and acute fear of failure in his professional life since 2003. Some progress had been made, but his recovery took a nosedive three years ago when his infant daughter, Lara, passed away from a rare heart defect.

Enke...August 24, 1977 - November 10, 2009

Choking back the tears, Teresa Enke said Robert had kept his depression secret for two reasons: if it became common knowledge, he thought his football career would be over and social services might cancel the recent adoption of his baby daughter.

"When he was acutely depressed, it was a very difficult time," she said. "Difficult above all because he didn't want anything to get out. He was terrified of losing Leila and his sport. The periods he spent playing and training were very important to him. They kept him going. It was what he lived for. It was his life elixir.

"We thought with love we could get through this, but you don't always make it."

Total shock

The revelation of Enke's problems came as a total shock to his employers at Hannover and Germany's national team staff. No one had the slightest inkling of what he was going through.

"He knew how to hide the scope of his problems," said his analyst, Valentin Markser. "He had developed defence mechanisms."

Capped eight times, Enke was Germany's No1 for most of 2008-09 and looked a good bet last summer to start in South Africa. However, not for the first time, bad luck would dog him. This autumn he was diagnosed with a bacterial stomach virus and, in his enforced absence, Rene Adler of Bayer Leverkusen filled in with aplomb, especially in the vital World Cup qualifying win against Russia in Moscow.

Not that all hope of going to South Africa was

lost for Enke. *Bundestrainer* Joachim Low was an unconditional admirer of his and there was plenty of time for the Hannover man to regain lost ground.

"We will miss him as a first-class sportsman and an extraordinary man," said Low. "We had wonderful discussions. He knew how to listen and always showed the utmost respect to others. Fairness was always an important part of his life. I will remember him with great fondness."

To honour their fallen friend, the German federation called off the friendly international with Chile, and in their next fixture, against Ivory Coast a few days later, skipper Michael Ballack symbolically and poignantly placed Enke's shirt on the substitutes' bench.

Enke is by no means the only German player to have tussled with psychological turmoil. Guido Erhard – the former 1860 Munich, Wolfsburg and Mainz striker – committed suicide by throwing himself under a train at Offenbach station in 2002, while Germany and Bayern Munich midfielder Sebastian Deisler, who was once thought of as his country's great footballing hope, also became depressed and eventually had to quit the game in 2007.

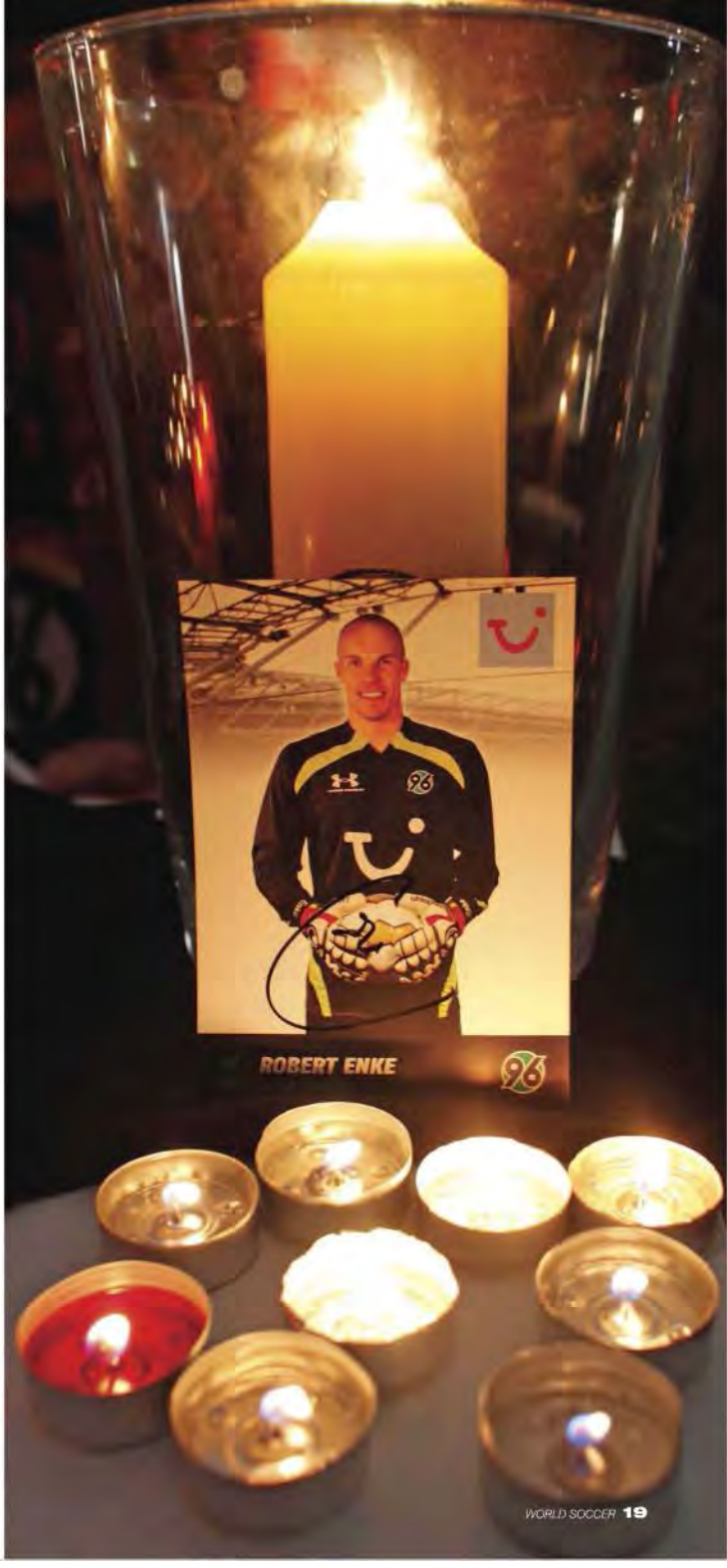
With the Enke tragedy top of the German news agenda, mental-health campaigners hope that the player's legacy will be a sport in which depression is no longer considered a taboo subject; a malady to stigmatise rather than show compassion for.

The German league and federation plan to campaign for a greater awareness of depression in the game and if they can go some way to injecting a little more humanity into the unforgiving, macho world of pro sport, they will have done a good job.

Then, and only then, will we be able to say that Robert Enke did not die in vain.

Nick Bidwell

Respects...(from left) Bierhoff, Low and Jurgen Klinsmann



All White in the end...Fallon (no14) celebrates the goal against Bahrain that booked New Zealand's place in South Africa

Rory Fallon
Kiwi hero who was capped by England

NEW ZEALAND

THE SCORER of the goal that took the All Whites to only their second World Cup finals had virtually given up all hope of representing the country of his birth after winning international caps at junior level for England.

The 27-year-old Fallon was making only his third appearance for New Zealand when he headed home Leo Bertos' corner in the Oceania/Asia play-off against Bahrain to book the Kiwis' place in South Africa this coming summer. However, as a teenager playing for English club side Barnsley, he had already earned himself international recognition with his adopted home and scored twice for their Under-17s against Turkey.

A born-again Christian and – through his mother's Ngati Porou tribal roots – only the second Maori ever to feature among Britain's professional ranks, he won further caps for England Under-19s and looked set for a glittering career.

His UK-born father, Kevin Fallon, had emigrated to New Zealand in the 1970s and was assistant coach to the All Whites when they reached the 1982 World Cup finals in Spain.

Over a period of three-and-a-half decades the gruff Yorkshireman had countless engagements with the New Zealand Football Association and Oceania Football Confederation, during which time he had spells as coach of the All Whites' national team and several of their junior sides. And for much of that time he would make sure his two sons, Sean and Rory, were up at six every morning for strenuous beach runs before ending their evenings with training drills.

Sean became the first player from outside the British Isles to be recruited as an apprentice by Liverpool, but he failed to make the grade at Anfield and eventually drifted into the West Australian State League.

However, in 1999, Barnsley offered Rory a somewhat less glamorous gateway into English football when the Tykes' youth development officer, Colin Walker, who had played under Fallon senior for Gisborne City and New Zealand, recognised the youngest Fallon's potential and went about nurturing it.

But after his early breakthrough, Rory's career stalled and he plied his trade in the lower leagues with Shrewsbury Town, Swindon Town, Yeovil Town and Swansea City before joining Plymouth Argyle in 2007.

Only a year ago he was ruing his original decision to reject New Zealand in favour of playing for England when he was a youth.

"I actually regretted pledging myself to England long before it became obvious I wouldn't appear at full international level with them – even as far back as 1999 when my dad was in charge of New Zealand at the World Under-17 Championship," he admitted.

"I cringe to think of all the campaigns I could have been involved in, but I am resigned to never playing international soccer again."

However, the fates intervened when FIFA surprisingly loosened its eligibility rules and the striker marked his unexpected return to international football with a goal on his debut for New Zealand in a friendly against Jordan in September 2009.

And two appearances later, when Bertos clipped a perfectly flighted corner onto the head of his former flatmate in Barnsley, the Oceania champions and Fallon were on their way to the World Cup finals.

Having abandoned his England aspirations, Rory hopes the World Cup will now lead to the other great dream he had when he arrived in the UK – a chance to play in the Premier League.

Paul Moon

Obafemi Martins
Supersub books World Cup ticket for Super Eagles

NIGERIA

THANKS TO A once-spurned striker and a large dollop of external influence, Nigeria have what many in west Africa thought beyond them: an invitation to their fourth World Cup party.

Two points adrift of Group B leaders Tunisia on the eve of the final round of matches, the Super Eagles looked in need of divine intervention to reach South Africa. And somehow, some way, the miracle happened. While Tunisia lost unexpectedly in Mozambique, the Eagles took full advantage with sub Martins scoring twice against Kenya in Nairobi to seal a momentous 3-2 victory.

It was the perfect riposte to those in his homeland – national coaches, federation officials and journalists – who have, at times, questioned his commitment to the cause. He certainly has had his share of no-shows, and the perception – right or wrong – is that he only turns up when in the mood.

Often a convenient target for the critics, the 25-year-old must feel he cannot win. When, in 2007, he chose to visit his sick mother rather than play in a friendly against Ghana, he was lambasted left and right. After his car was sprayed with bullets in a horrifying incident at a Lagos petrol station that same year, he could have been excused for wondering if national call-ups were worth it.

Equally there can be little doubt that Martins is injury prone. That he appeared in only three qualifiers is essentially down to physical gremlins; last season alone he had to contend with a torn hamstring, a groin injury and other assorted knocks.

"Some of the things said and written about my relationship with the Super Eagles have been really unfair," says Martins, who has settled in excellently at German champions Wolfsburg this season after a £10.5million move from Newcastle United. "It's clear I've not had the best of luck with injuries. My feelings for the national team are as strong as they always were. My heart is with this side. I think I proved that in the qualifiers I played in.

"We've more than enough quality in the squad to put on a good show in the World Cup finals. We can call on players in all the top leagues in Europe. Guys like Kanu, Yakubu, Mikel, Yobo and myself know all about the top level. It wasn't perfect in the qualifiers, but we can take heart from the fact we stayed unbeaten. I'm sure we won't disappoint."

Hero...Martins celebrates his double against Kenya

Whoever is in charge of the Super Eagles in South Africa – coach Shaibu Amodu may have masterminded two World Cup qualifying campaigns but he remains deeply unpopular – should start to pray "Oba" is fit for purpose on the big days in June.

Nick Bidwell

Rafa Benitez
Liverpool "emperor" has lost his clothes

ENGLAND

WHILE LIVERPOOL manager Rafa Benitez continued to work his tactical magic in the Champions League he was safe from critical examination of his domestic strategy. But with the top prize out of sight – the Reds will play in the Europa League when the knockout phase gets under way in February – everyone can see that the emperor has lost his clothes.

The irony is Benitez is protected now by the very financial fragility significant progress in the Champions League was meant to avert.

No top-table place...Benitez (left) and Gerrard feel the gloom after Champions League exit

One year into a new five-year contract, he has manoeuvred himself adroitly into a position of overall technical control. Replacing him would cost Liverpool severance money they cannot afford and an administrative void co-owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett dare not contemplate as they have enough transatlantic financial concerns on their minds.

In previous seasons Benitez was his own worst enemy: dropping points unnecessarily by resting Fernando Torres too often and playing Steven Gerrard out of position too many times.

Now he is looking into the mirror. Benitez has had to play Torres too often, even in a bit-part role, when the centre-forward was desperately in need of a rest for the long-term sake of not only Liverpool but also Spain's World Cup effort. Similarly, now that Gerrard has established his omnipotence in attacking central midfield, even when below full fitness, his absence is unthinkable.

Benitez has insisted that winning trophies is not essential and maintaining a minimal success level – a top four finish and therefore a regular presence in the Champions League – is economically more important to the club.

He bought himself more time with the 2-0 Merseyside derby win at Everton, which was Liverpool's eighth victory in their last 10 visits to Goodison Park, to still the calls from some former players – ex-Czech Republic attacker Patrik Berger among them – for his departure.

Chief executive Christian Purslow insists the Spaniard is "under no threat" while skipper Gerrard has promised to try to win the Europa League now that Champions League glory has gone.

Maybe. But Benitez might be well advised, for one season at least, to put domestic reality ahead of European surrealism.

Keir Radnedge

Keir Radnedge

Europe in 2018? Not quite...

European bidders could still be outflanked in the race for World Cup votes

THREE WORLD CUPS are up for grabs in the next 12 months. One will be played to a conclusion on the pitches of South Africa in June and July; the others, of 2018 and 2022, will be played out in conference centres, hotel corridors and committee rooms across the continents before FIFA decides, in December 2010, on the lucky hosts.

Thus far in the process it has been assumed that 2018 will go to one of the European bidders: England, Spain/Portugal, Russia or Holland/Belgium. The others – Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Qatar, South Korea and the United States – would then be left to scrap over 2022.

Reasoning for that scenario rests on two factors: firstly, by 2018, commercially and financially dominant Europe will not have hosted a World Cup for 12 years (since Germany 2006); secondly, Europe has a potentially crucial eight votes in the 23-man FIFA executive (discounting president Sepp Blatter).

Logic, however, is not always decisive, and that may prove the case over World Cup hosting as well. The political wrangling and infighting will be extensive. Just think, the eight losers will not be able to bid again to host a World Cup for up to 20 years or more.

Such a realisation will represent a huge collapse of aspiration. Also, it may spark a wave of ill-feeling within the football family that Blatter gave away too much too far in advance. It may even weaken his position, since his power of ultimate patronage over the World Cup hosting will have gone.

Now, consider the voting for 2018 and 2022, both to be held on the same day in December 2010...

One World Cup in three

All four European candidates have members on the FIFA executive. If one European bid falls in the first round of voting, will its representative vote for another European in subsequent rounds? After all, if a European country wins in 2018 that means that none of the Europeans can contest the 2022 vote since a region can host, at most, only one World Cup in three.

Thus, the temptation could be for a European loser in the first round to vote for a non-European bid in subsequent rounds in order to keep alive the possibility of competing in the 2022 vote.

Australia and the United States in particular will both have factored that possibility into their campaigning.

"Politics," as the former British prime minister Harold Wilson once said, "is the art of the possible." Sports politics are no different in that regard from governmental politics.

So 2018 is not necessarily a "done deal" for Europe and other outcomes still remain possible. ●

> **Logic is not always decisive... and that may prove the case over World Cup hosting**

Reds fall foul

Out...Steven Gerrard's Liverpool

Appliance of science in Doha

A CASUAL VISITOR to the Al Sadd Stadium in Doha, Qatar, will hardly notice the small black portholes in the pitch surround in front of the stands. They look like minor decoration but are nothing of the kind. They serve a purpose - and a potentially revolutionary one at that.

One of the innovations with which Qatar wants to amaze FIFA during the 2022 World Cup bidding process is a system which cools the air temperature for players and supporters.

Al Sadd are an appropriate club to invest in the initial system. They are the richest and the most successful club in Qatar, with more than 300 cups in the trophy room.

More significant in the wider scheme of the game, however, is their air-cooling system. A power plant 100 yards from the stadium drives the 6,000 tonnes of refrigeration from chilled water through a pipeline network to the arena and out through the 150 vents which fringe the pitch

# of UEFA's silly rule

SOMETIMES ONE has to wonder about the game's international rulers; the directors and officials whose job it is to guide and direct football in a sensible, progressive manner.

Take Michel Platini, president of UEFA. The Frenchman is being talked of as a possible successor to Sepp Blatter as leader of FIFA whenever Blatter decides he has had enough – though that will not be for at least another six years.

Yet Platini oversees and acquiesces in a competitive formula for UEFA's Champions League which is both irrational and competitively self-defeating. And Liverpool have fallen victim to it.

The English club's win away to Debrecen in Hungary was not enough to prevent their first exit at the group stages for six years. But the truth was that Liverpool were victims not only of their own injuries and erratic performances, but also of UEFA's nonsensical rules.

In the vast majority of league competitions around the world, goal difference is the first stop in separating teams level on points. If that had been the case in the Champions League the Reds would have still been in with a fighting chance.

But UEFA prefers to use head-to-head results as the first standard of tie-breaker, which is ridiculous and flies in the face of the concept of fair play. This is no longer a cup competition; this is a league competition and should be played according to a logical league format.

If the group remained open to goal difference then Liverpool's interest – not to mention that of sponsors, television, general media and supporters – in their last game would have remained open and the drama would have rolled on for another two weeks.

UEFA needs to put its Champions League house in order. For the sake of football. For the sake of the fans. For the sake of Michel Platini's possible presidential ambitions...

Cool...Qatar's state-of-the-art Al Sadd Stadium

and are replicated beneath every seat.

While the temperature outside can reach 40 degrees, inside it can be held down at around 20 degrees – low enough to keep any gloved Nordic midfielder happy.

The first of its kind

The system is believed to be the first of its kind anywhere in the world, and was installed and started up four months ago at a cost of around £12million. Already research scientists are working on refinements to ensure that future versions work to a carbon-lite, eco-friendly power system.

For the Qataris this is the most significant legacy component of their 2022 bid since they would promise to make the technology available further south in hotter climes where the need is greater – and not only, of course, for the advantage of football in particular or sport in general.

Qatar is certainly different by comparison with the football traditions of Europe and South America, and the components of their bid to host the 2022 World Cup underline the point.

The tiny Gulf state is in the comparatively early stages of a gold-plated, natural-gas-fired commercial evolution and the promise is already evident in money-no-object facilities such as the air-cooling system and the Aspire sports city.

Persuading FIFA that these innovations are practical is one thing; persuading FIFA of long-term financial security – particularly after the disaster that is Dubai – is something else.

Bigger and better...Kaka (left) holds off England's Gareth Barry

A different kind of Brazil

BRAZILIAN PLAYERS are definitely not what they used to be. England manager Fabio Capello made the point before flying back to London after the friendly defeat in the Qatari desert.

In essence, he said that Brazil are better than European champions Spain not only because of their technique but because their skill is complemented by a new level of physical strength. No longer are they the delicate little wonderboys who can be knocked off the ball by any passing puff of wind.

Take Kaka as the perfect example: skilful and quick, but also tall and wide-shouldered. Didi, Mengalvio and co were never built like this.

Capello's assessment was backed up by Brazil coach Dunga, who agreed and pointed to rising standards and improvement in health care and nutrition over the past 20 years.

Capello commented: "Brazil are a really good team, the strongest in the world – better than Spain – with really good technique and pace but also really strong physically. You could see it with every tackle, every time they were one against one. So I learned that we need to be 100 per cent physically and really strong ourselves."

Sounds like bad news, then, for Michael Owen, Ledley King and the like.

Luck of the draw

After being paired with France, Mexico and Uruguay, South Africa could become the first World Cup host to fail to reach the knockout round. Keir Radnedge reports from Cape Town

AS THE DUST settled after the World Cup draw in Cape Town so the various managers tried to assess the task ahead – either warning against complacency over what might appear an "easy" draw or promising confidence and optimism against the seemingly tougher tasks.

An immediate defiant reaction to the task produced by the draw – undertaken by FIFA general secretary Jerome Valcke and Oscar-winning South African actress Charlize Theron (with the help of David Beckham and Co) – came from South Africa manager Carlos Alberto Parreira, who said: "Ours is the only group to have two former world champions [France and Uruguay] but it doesn't scare us. It is a challenge for us."

Mexico complete a challenging group. No host nation has ever failed to progress – they all expect an easy first-round group – but this has not been the fate of South Africa.

Back in 1966, hosts England came up against exactly the same opponents as South Africa now. Like Bafana Bafana, England also played France in their last group game – and won 2-0 to go through to the quarter-finals and on towards ultimate victory.

South Africa may come to that last game needing to win to progress. But so, probably, will France and defeat could spell elimination.

The bad news for the greater good of the World Cup finals tournament itself is in the calendar. South Africa, as hosts, were placed as the first team drawn in Group A. This means they play the opening match, against Mexico. It also means the last two, simultaneous, games in that group will provide the first teams heading home. So, after just 11 days, South Africa could be out with little more than one third of the event completed. That would be a massive blow on all fronts.

First, of course, it would be a humiliation and embarrassment for the first African host nation. Secondly, any such tournament depends on host fervour which sweeps the entire event along. If South Africa go out early then the present tidal wave of excitement and enthusiasm will be punctured.

Elsewhere in the draw, the prospect of the renewals of great old rivalries surfaced: England against the United States, Portugal against both Brazil and North Korea...and Argentina against Greece and Nigeria.

High drama

Lost among local anguish at the tough draw for hosts South Africa, was the revival of a moment of victory, scandal and high drama. And the "star" of it was a man not even at the draw.

Diego Maradona, coach of Argentina, was absent because of a two-month ban imposed for his foul-mouthed tirade after the qualifying decider against Uruguay.

His side were drawn in Group B against South Korea, Nigeria and Greece, which provided good and bad omens. In 1986 Maradona played against South Korea in the group stage when Argentina went on to win the World Cup, while in 1994 he scored a superb goal – which he celebrated memorably into camera – against Greece but then, after the next game out against Nigeria, failed a dope test and was kicked out of the World Cup.

Most of Europe's coaches were satisfied with the outcome and some – such as Italy's Marcello Lippi, Spain's Vicente Del Bosque and England's Fabio Capello – had good reason, while Germany's Joachim Low and Portugal's Carlos Queiroz had more room for concern.

But whether they fall in the final or the first round, every one of the 32 finalists will be in the money. The rest of the world may be fighting off recession and financial meltdown, but not football, with FIFA increasing the prize money from £140million in 2006 to a staggering £250m.

The 2010 winners will be paid £18m, the losing finalists £14m, third-place team £12m and fourth £11m. The losing quarter-finalists will be rewarded with £8.5m, the losing second-rounders £5.5m each and even those nations who fly home after the first round get £5m each.

Tough on hosts...South Africa would have hoped for an easier group

In 1966 hosts England had exactly the same group as South Africa ...and went on to win the competition

In addition, each of the 32 finalist nations will receive £0.6m from FIFA towards preparation costs. How each national association uses the money is not a matter for FIFA.

FIFA has also accepted the concept of its debt to the clubs and is setting aside £25m – and will do so again in 2014 in Brazil – to keep happy the clubs of players selected for the finals, with general secretary Valcke saying: "The European Club Association was involved in the discussions after which we decided that the £25m will be paid to the clubs through the national associations. For each player playing at the World Cup, from 15 days before the tournament for one day following the end of his time in South Africa, each club will get US$1600 (£980) per day.

"In exchange the clubs recognised that they would take out insurance to protect their players and could not take action against FIFA in case anything then happened to him."

The money, of course, is unlikely to stop club managers complaining about their players being late for pre-season training for the 2010-11 season or using the excuse that the players are tired as the season progresses.

But by then football could have new world champions. ●

Match Schedule

All times local

GROUP A

SOUTH AFRICA ■ MEXICO ■ URUGUAY ■ FRANCE

June 11	South Africa v Mexico	Jo'burg (Soccer City)	16:00
June 11	Uruguay v France	Cape Town	20:30
June 16	South Africa v Uruguay	Pretoria	20:30
June 17	France v Mexico	Polokwane	20:30
June 22	Mexico v Uruguay	Rustenburg	16:00
June 22	France v South Africa	Bloemfontein	16:00

GROUP B

ARGENTINA ■ NIGERIA ■ SOUTH KOREA ■ GREECE

June 12	South Korea v Greece	Port Elizabeth	13:30
June 12	Argentina v Nigeria	Jo'burg (Ellis Park)	16:00
June 17	Argentina v South Korea	Jo'burg (Soccer City)	13:30
June 17	Greece v Nigeria	Bloemfontein	16:00
June 22	Nigeria v South Korea	Durban	20:30
June 22	Greece v Argentina	Polokwane	20:30

GROUP C

ENGLAND ■ USA ■ ALGERIA ■ SLOVENIA

June 12	England v USA	Rustenburg	20:30
June 13	Algeria v Slovenia	Polokwane	13:30
June 18	Slovenia v USA	Jo'burg (Ellis Park)	16:00
June 18	England v Algeria	Cape Town	20:30
June 23	Slovenia v England	Port Elizabeth	16:00
June 23	USA v Algeria	Pretoria	16:00

GROUP D

GERMANY ■ AUSTRALIA ■ SERBIA ■ GHANA

June 13	Serbia v Ghana	Pretoria	16:00
June 13	Germany v Australia	Durban	20:30
June 18	Germany v Serbia	Port Elizabeth	13:30
June 19	Ghana v Australia	Rustenburg	16:00
June 23	Ghana v Germany	Jo'burg (Soccer City)	20:30
June 23	Australia v Serbia	Nelspruit	20:30

GROUP E

HOLLAND ■ DENMARK ■ JAPAN ■ CAMEROON

June 14	Holland v Denmark	Jo'burg (Soccer City)	13:30
June 14	Japan v Cameroon	Bloemfontein	16:00
June 19	Holland v Japan	Durban	13:30
June 19	Cameroon v Denmark	Pretoria	20:30
June 24	Cameroon v Holland	Cape Town	20:30
June 24	Denmark v Japan	Rustenburg	20:30

GROUP F

ITALY ■ PARAGUAY ■ NEW ZEALAND ■ SLOVAKIA

June 14	Italy v Paraguay	Cape Town	20:30
June 15	New Zealand v Slovakia	Rustenburg	13:30
June 20	Slovakia v Paraguay	Bloemfontein	13:30
June 20	Italy v New Zealand	Nelspruit	16:00
June 24	Slovakia v Italy	Jo'burg (Ellis Park)	16:00
June 24	Paraguay v New Zealand	Polokwane	16:00

GROUP G

BRAZIL ■ NORTH KOREA ■ IVORY COAST ■ PORTUGAL

June 15	Ivory Coast v Portugal	Port Elizabeth	16:00
June 15	Brazil v North Korea	Jo'burg (Ellis Park)	20:30
June 20	Brazil v Ivory Coast	Jo'burg (Soccer City)	20:30
June 21	Portugal v North Korea	Cape Town	13:30
June 25	North Korea v Ivory Coast	Nelspruit	16:00
June 25	Portugal v Brazil	Durban	16:00

GROUP H

SPAIN ■ SWITZERLAND ■ HONDURAS ■ CHILE

June 16	Honduras v Chile	Nelspruit	13:30
June 16	Spain v Switzerland	Durban	16:00
June 21	Chile v Switzerland	Port Elizabeth	16:00
June 21	Spain v Honduras	Jo'Burg (Ellis Park)	20:30
June 25	Chile v Spain	Pretoria	20:30
June 25	Switzerland v Honduras	Bloemfontein	20:30

ROUND OF 16

June 26	Winners A v Runners-up B (1)	Port Elizabeth	16:00
June 26	Winners C v Runners-up D (2)	Rustenburg	20:30
June 27	Winners D v Runners-up C (3)	Bloemfontein	16:00
June 27	Winners B v Runners-up A (4)	Jo'burg (Soccer City)	20:30
June 28	Winners E v Runners-up F (5)	Durban	16:00
June 28	Winners G v Runners-up H (6)	Jo'burg (Ellis Park)	20:30
June 29	Winners F v Runners-up E (7)	Pretoria	16:00
June 29	Winners H v Runners-up G (8)	Cape Town	20:30

QUARTER-FINALS

July 2	Match 5 v Match 6 (A)	Port Elizabeth	16:00
July 2	Match 1 v Match 2 (B)	Jo'burg (Soccer City)	20:30
July 3	Match 3 v Match 4 (C)	Cape Town	16:00
July 3	Match 7 v Match 8 (D)	Jo'burg (Ellis Park)	20:30

SEMI-FINALS

July 6	Match A v Match B	Cape Town	20:30
July 7	Match C v Match D	Durban	20:30

THIRD PLACE PLAY-OFF

July 10		Port Elizabeth	20:30

FINAL

July 11		Jo'burg (Soccer City)	20:30

'The tip of the

The match-fixing scandal unfolding in Germany is set to become European football's biggest corruption case. Nick Bidwell reports

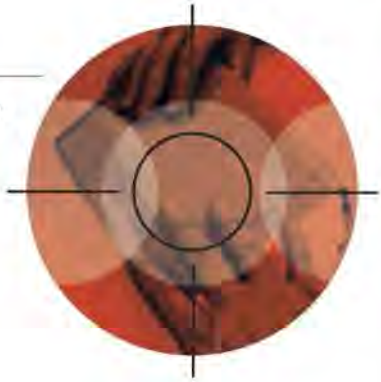
THE CAFE KING is an unremarkable establishment in the Charlottenburg district of Berlin. It is also the match-fixing and illegal betting nerve centre the authorities apparently could not shut down.

When referee Robert Hoyzer and three Croat brothers – Ante, Milan and Filip Sapina – were sentenced to hefty jail sentences in 2006 for manipulating the results of games in the German second division, regional leagues and domestic cup, the assumption was that the ring was dead and buried. Unfortunately it was not. On release from prison, after serving half of a 35-month term, Ante Sapina immediately went back to "work" – and this time he would be expanding into foreign markets.

At a dramatic press conference in November, state prosecutors in the western German city of Bochum – who, along with UEFA's newly founded anti-corruption unit and

Home turf...the meeting place where matches are said to have been fixed

iceberg...'



Two out of three...the Sapina brothers, Milan (left) and Filip

overseas police forces, have been probing this murky world since the beginning of 2009 – sensationally spelled out the extent of the network.

They alleged the rigging of some 200 matches in nine countries (Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey), including three Champions League and 12 Europa League ties; the involvement of players, coaches, referees and club officials; and estimated returns for the gambling syndicate of £10million.

More worrying still, Bochum police director Friedhelm Atlhans dubbed this as "only the tip of the iceberg".

In a series of raids – mostly of German properties but also taking in some in Switzerland – computers and documents were confiscated, while cash and valuables worth £1m were seized and 17 suspects arrested.

Under lock and key

Among those placed in custody were Ante Sapina, his brother Milan, and associates from Berlin, the Ruhr, Nuremberg and Osnabruck. Prosecutors believe they now have all the main players under lock and key – especially loyal Sapina lieutenants such as Nurettin G, a Turkish amusement-arcade owner from near Osnabruck; Deniz C, another Turk from the Ruhr and an unnamed 34-year-old Croat in Nuremberg.

It is thought that the Bochum investigation was kick-started by a separate enquiry into the activities of a small betting agency in the North Rhine-Westphalia region. Prosecutors from Dortmund thought they were looking into a case of fraud and extortion, only for wire taps to lead them into the murky world of football match-fixing.

Concentrating almost exclusively on low-profile, lower-league games that were far removed from the media spotlight, Ante Sapina and associates reaped substantial rewards from betting in the Asian market, then had the money laundered by a Malaysian middleman in Hong Kong. According to the Bochum gangbusters, over 200 people made up the fixing team.

> According to the Bochum gangbusters over 200 people made up the fixing team

It is interesting how Sapina's tactics have changed. In his early days as a result planner, compliant referees – such as Hoyzer and Dominik Marks – were his conduit; now he and his associates choose to approach players directly, looking for individuals known to gamble or who have debts. The corrupters get to know their mark and then tempt them.

At an emergency meeting of the nine countries affected, UEFA announced they were focusing on seven games in continental club competition this season, as well as five clubs: Tirana and Vllaznia from Albania, Latvia's Dinaburg, Ljubljana in Slovenia and Hungary's Honved.

Caught...Ante Sapina was sentenced to 35 months

Under the microscope are the Champions League qualifier between Norway's Stabaek and Tirana, both legs of Europa League eliminators pitting Israel's Bnei Yehuda Tel Aviv against Dinaburg, plus Vllaznia versus Rapid Wien, Ljubljana v Metalurh Donetsk and Fenerbahce's game with Honved in the same competition. To make matters worse, UEFA added that one of their own officials and three referees were possibly involved.

Deep-cleaning operation

The German game in particular is in need of a deep-cleaning operation, with no fewer than 32 games under suspicion. The list of shame comprises four second-division fixtures, three more in the third tier, 18 in the Regionalliga, five in the Oberliga and two youth league games. A Regionalliga referee may have been bought too.

One club very much at the eye of the storm are Osnabruck, who were relegated from second to the third division last May. The homes of two of last season's squad were searched by police and investigators believe that up to four players took bribes to influence a number of end-of-term games, particularly the defeats at Augsburg (3-0) and Nurnberg (2-0). Sapina's gang are thought to have put £150,000 on an Osnabruck defeat by at least two goals in Augsburg, netting them double their stake.

Another club in the dock are Regionalliga side Ulm. They are alleged to have colluded with gamblers in four fixtures last term, as well as in a 5-0 pre-season friendly loss to Turkish giants Fenerbahce. Three Ulm players – Davor Kraljevic, Marijo Marinovic and Dinko Radojevic – had their contracts terminated because of their supposed involvement.

Piece by piece the truth is emerging; names, places, amounts and now admissions.

Patrick Neumann, the captain of

Regionalliga side Verl, became the first German player to confirm – through his lawyer – that he had taken cash to facilitate a loss. Neumann, who like team-mate Tim Hagedorn has been suspended by his club, says he received €500 (£450) before a game with Borussia Monchengladbach B, but gave the money back when his side ran out 4-3 winners. The Bochum prosecutors consider Verl's 1-0 defeat to Koln B to be equally dubious.

As a response to the scandal, the German federation (DFB) is promising severe punishment for wrongdoers and, in conjunction with the domestic League (DFL), is to create an anti-betting-ring task force. But there is little doubt, the authorities have been left with egg on their face. The match-fixing early-warning system set up after the Hoyzer affair clearly did not work and the feeling is that the DFB did not have their eye on the ball; no sooner had Sapina been arrested, they issued a statement claiming no German games were affected. Not quite.

"No sports federation in the world can guard 100 per cent against international organised crime fixing matches," complained DFB president Theo Zwanziger. "We cannot do it all on our own."

> **The match-fixing early-warning system set up after the Hoyzer affair clearly did not work**

This sorry business truly is a running sore. In Belgium, second division Namur are reported to have produced results to order, Hungarian club Uljpest Dosza have had the finger of suspicion pointed at them, while eight top-flight games in Bosnia and 14 in Croatia appear tainted.

Damaging headlines

Switzerland, a land of the law-abiding if ever there was one, did not escape either, with 22 Challenge League (second tier) encounters considered suspect. Thun's 5-1 defeat in Yverdon and Locarno's 4-0 win over Gossau made the most damaging headlines.

The word is Gossau split €20,000 (£18,000) for losing by two clear goals, while Thun – who were Champions League participants only four years ago – collected €15,000 (£13,750) for their four-goal reverse. Thun striker Omar Faye has already been suspended.

The betting mafia wield plenty of influence at Bosnian side Travik; they were able to force the club to take on a pair of players and financed a training camp in Switzerland, where they could play a series of scripted friendlies, all of which had big money riding on them at the bookmakers.

A key member of the Sapina crew is rumoured to have admitted to arranging the results of a Turkish Cup match involving Trabzonspor and Antalyaspor in January 2009 and an Ankaraspor v Bursaspor elite league game last April.

"I'm about to start a new life," Ante Sapina told journalists in June 2008 on his release from a Berlin jail. "The chapter of scandal is at an end for me. It was a long and hard sentence but I've learnt my lesson."

Shameless does not begin to describe the serial match-fixer. It remains to be seen whether the powers-that-be in Europe can rid football of his like for good.

WHO'S UNDER INVESTIGATION?

German police are co-ordinating an investigation into match-fixing in

9
DIFFERENT COUNTRIES
Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey

200
MATCHES, INCLUDING
32 in Germany
8 in Bosnia
14 in Croatia
22 in Switzerland

5
CLUBS UNDER UEFA INVESTIGATION
Tirana of Albania
Dinaburg of Latvia
Vllaznia of Albania
Ljubljana of Slovenia
Honved of Hungary

7
MATCHES UEFA INVESTIGATIONS ARE FOCUSING ON
- Stabaek v Tirana, July 21, 2009 (Champions League 2nd qual round)
- Bnei Yehuda Tel Aviv v Dinaburg, July 16, 2009 (Europa League 2nd qual round)
- Dinaburg v Bnei Yehuda Tel Aviv, July 23, 2009 (Europa League 2nd qual round)
- Vllaznia v Rapid Wien, July 23, 2009 (Europa League 2nd qual round)
- Rapid Wien v Vllaznia, July 16, 2009 (Europa League 2nd qual round)
- Ljubljana v Metalurh Donetsk, August 6, 2009 (Europa League 3rd qual round)
- Fenerbahce v Honved, July 30, 2009 (Europa League 3rd qual round)

Disgraced...famous old Budapest club Honved are under investigation

Being looked at...Rapid Wien (right) versus Vllaznia in Austria

Recent match-fixing scandals

PORTUGAL 2004

Police arrested referees and officials – including the chairman of the country's league and the head of the referees' panel – as part of Operation Golden Whistle. In May 2008, Boavista were relegated and Porto were docked six points for attempted bribery. Porto president Pinto Da Costa was suspended from football for two years but found not guilty by a Portuguese court.

GREECE 2004

UEFA investigated the UEFA Cup game between Panionios and Dinamo Tbilisi after British bookmakers reported an unusually high number of half-time bets for a 5-2 win for the Greek side, who were trailing 1-0 at the break but finished as 5-2 winners.

GERMANY 2005

Referee Robert Hoyzer was jailed for two years and five months after he admitted fixing matches in the Bundesliga 2 and German Cup on behalf of a betting syndicate organised by Ante Sapina.

BELGIUM 2005

Players and officials from top division clubs Lierse, La Louviere, Mons and Geel admitted being offered money by a Chinese businessman to throw matches.

BRAZIL 2005

Eleven matches in the national championship were replayed after ref Edilson Pereira de Carvalho admitted match-fixing.

ITALY 2006

Juventus were stripped of their 2005 and 2006 league titles and relegated to Serie B for their part in the Calciopoli scandal. Juve and other leading clubs, including Milan, Fiorentina and Lazio, were accused of rigging games by selecting favourable referees.

Suspended...Pinto Da Costa

Admission...Edilson Pereira de Carvalho

Stripped...Juventus

Suicidal...Kayumov

Jailed...Hoyzer (left)

FINLAND 2006

Controversy surrounded Alliansi, who lost 8-0 to Haka shortly after being taken over by controversial Chinese businessman Ye Zheyun, who was involved in the Belgian scandal.

SPAIN 2008

Tenerife players were accused of throwing a second division match on the final day of the 2007-08 season, thereby allowing Malaga to win promotion at the expense of Real Sociedad.

MACEDONIA 2009

Champions Pobeda were banned from European club competition for eight years following an investigation into their defeat by Armenia's Pyunik in a Champions League qualifier in July 2004.

POLAND 2009

Almost 200 people, including board members of football associations, club officials, players and referees, were arrested in a match-fixing probe involving 52 clubs.

CHINA 2009

Sixteen former players, along with club and league officials, were arrested as part of an investigation into match-fixing in the Chinese league.

RUSSIA 2009

The Russian FA launched an investigation into Terek's suspicious 3-2 win over Krylya Sovetov. The referee of the match, Almir Kayumov, later tried to commit suicide.

Declan Hill

Comment

We've been here before

But the football authorities failed to act

WE HAVE seen this before haven't we? It all broke in the early 1970s. There was a fantastic story of the blonde standing outside the hotel door of a Portuguese referee. She was on the arm of a fixer who offered the referee a brand new car and $5,000 if he were to help Juventus through to the Final of the European Cup.

It was one detail in a superb investigation led by *World Soccer*'s Brian Glanville and his colleague Keith Botsford. They uncovered a network of fixers and referees who corrupted matches across Europe. They got the evidence; they showed the links and the meetings between some of these people; they brought it to the authorities. And then?

Nothing. Not a single well-resourced investigation. Not a single serious prosecution against the ringleaders. Not a single reform to protect football from match-fixing.

Since then the list of fixed matches in European football is a long one.

There was Claude Bez and his gang at Bordeaux who were convicted of fixing games. They too had blondes standing outside the hotel doors of referees, but this time the women were ready to go inside the room. There was a constant supply of expensive prostitutes by some clubs to referees in return for favourable refereeing. When the investigation started, one of the lawyers of the fixers involved said: "There will be a tidal wave of investigations that will go all through European football." We are still waiting for the investigation.

We are still waiting after the investigation against Pinto Da Costa – the controversial owner of Porto – was launched by Portuguese police.

We are still waiting after the Robert Hoyzer – the corrupted German referee – investigation.

We are still waiting after the Luciano Moggi – the general manager of Juventus – scandal in Italy, which almost exactly duplicated the Glanville-led investigation 30 years earlier.

We are still waiting because what usually happens with these investigations is they start with a flood of publicity, lots of serious sounding words from football officials, but at the end of the day only one or two very minor officials are convicted.

This investigation may be different. It was started, in part, because of the revelations in my book *The Fix*.

Often going undercover and wearing a wire tap, I investigated a new type of fixing: one based on the global phenomena of internet betting in Asia.

The Asian gambling market is massive. It is mostly illegal. And the fixers working in it have destroyed the credibility of most of the Asian football leagues, so the gamblers and the fixers have turned their attention to Europe.

New form of fixing

UEFA officials and German police started their own investigation into this new form of fixing after the publication of the book. However, more than a police investigation is needed. Otherwise, all that will happen is that one lot of criminals will be replaced with another lot, and the fixing will continue. There is a small window of opportunity for football officials to stop the fixers ruining the European leagues.

First, they need to set up well-resourced integrity units staffed with former policemen and gambling experts who have no ties or loyalties to football insiders. They can properly root out any corruption that may exist.

Two, football officials need to make it easy for a football player to say "no" to the fixers. There have to be effective training programs established, anti-corruption hotlines set up and long-term medical benefit systems funded by the gambling industry for players and referees.

There is a small window of opportunity for football officials to stop the fixers ruining the European leagues

Finally, every football league and tournament should be examined for situations in football that simply invite fixing by the players, referees and clubs. The end-of-year fixing in Italy between clubs desperate for promotion and relegation is so well-known that most betting companies will not accept bets on these games.

However, the worst case is the Champions League. The early rounds of the tournament invite fixing. UEFA estimates that at least 40 games in the last few years of early Champions League rounds have been fixed.

Why? Because most teams in Eastern Europe have absolutely no chance of winning the competition and most of them have no chance of even making it to the lucrative group stage. They are asked to fly their teams at great expense across Europe to play some unglamorous team in Armenia or Iceland. They actually lose money by taking part in the Champions League. So many clubs sell the games – home and away – for around €500million (£450m) on the gambling market which then pays the players' salaries for the next year.

A solution? Replace these rounds with a tournament played in Eastern Europe in the first weeks of July. Each team is guaranteed at least three games, the profits are shared and the chance of corruption goes down.

There are dozens more ways to prevent fixing. But until we see any reforms take place, we know that all the words of the national associations are exactly that – words – and once this current scandal is over corruption will creep back into the game. ●

Read more on match fixing at worldsoccer.com

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- **83%** of Chelsea matches produce at least **11 Corners**…
- **75%** of Sunderland matches see a Goal **Before the 28th Minute**…
- Man United have won the **Most Corners** in **92%** of all matches…

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ws2011

63 best-supported national teams

Average home crowds in the 2010 World Cup qualifiers

1 MEXICO 81,599

2 ENGLAND 79,754

3 FRANCE 64,130

4 REPUBLIC OF IRELAND 59,298

6 IRAN 55,428

7 CHILE 54,470

8 BRAZIL 53,335

9 JAPAN 53,107

10 AUSTRALIA 52,870

We're on our way... Socceroos fans get behind their team against Uzbekistan in Sydney

11 SCOTLAND 48,477

12 GERMANY 48,069

Big draw...the qualifier between Mexico and USA at the Azteca Stadium was watched by 104,499 spectators

13 RUSSIA 47,117

14 HOLLAND 45,213

15 ARGENTINA 44,917

16 PORTUGAL 40,792

17 SAUDI ARABIA 39,750

18 SOUTH KOREA 39,252

19 EGYPT 38,833

20 URUGUAY 37,465

21 NIGERIA 35,833

22 CHINA 35,500

23 ECUADOR 35,087

24 IVORY COAST 34,242

25 DENMARK 34,040

26 HONDURAS 33,222

27 SPAIN 32,954

28 SERBIA 32,342

Fly the flag...Serbia fans hail a goal against Austria in Belgrade on the way to winning the group

29 GHANA 32,158

30 COLOMBIA 31,816

31 HUNGARY 30,711

32 PERU 30,163

33 ALGERIA 29,750

Green and white army...the fans go wild as Algeria take the lead against Zambia in Blida

34 PARAGUAY 29,405

35 SWEDEN 29,130

36 AUSTRIA 29,100

37 VENEZUELA 29,002

38 CAMEROON 27,733

39 ITALY 27,291

40 SWITZERLAND 27,125

41 NORTH KOREA 26,125

42 TUNISIA 26,000

43 UKRAINE 25,252

44 CROATIA 24,957

45 TURKEY 24,422

46 THAILAND 24,050

47 EL SALVADOR 23,811

48 GREECE 22,874

49 USA 22,799

50 POLAND 20,941

Put your shirt on us... but the qualifiers proved only heartache for Poland and their fans

51 ISRAEL 20,668

52 AZERBAIJAN 20,300

Crescent party...Turkey fans get in the mood for the qualifier against Spain in Istanbul

53 BOLIVIA 20,272

54 NORWAY 20,088

55 UZBEKISTAN 19,983

56 BULGARIA 19,632

57 GEORGIA 19,150

58 BELARUS 18,202

59 COSTA RICA 16,540

Fighting for the colours...a Costa Rica supporter goes for the spectacular, only to have hopes dashed as the team lost out to Uruguay in the play-offs

60 SLOVAKIA 15,469

61 BOSNIA 13,360

62 CANADA 12,135

63 SLOVENIA 10,320

The eyes have it...veiled female Saudi fans watch their team play Qatar in Muscat

DISPATCHES

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

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The mother

Egypt and Algeria's World Cup play-off caused the biggest international diplomatic incident sparked by football since the "Soccer War" between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969

EGYPT

JAMES MONTAGUE in Cairo

HOSNI MUBARAK isn't a man accustomed to defeat. The Egyptian president, after all, has been in charge for more than 30 years, outflanking regional and global rivals with consummate ease. Even Egypt's electoral process offers him scant chance of coming second: he romped home during the 2005 elections with almost 90 per cent of the vote.

Yet as Mubarak sat in his residence watching the World Cup play-off between Egypt and Algeria – which was being played in Sudan – that unusual sinking feeling would have come across him as Antar Yahia's thunderbolt sent the Desert Foxes to their first finals since 1986 and the Pharaohs, back-to-back African champions no less, home empty-handed.

As pictures beamed back of wild Algerian celebrations, Egyptian TV was flooded with calls from Egypt fans claiming to have been attacked by knife-wielding Algerians. "Damn the so-called Arab unity, we should no longer talk about it," an angry Ibrahim Hegazi said on his *Nile Sport* show. "We should review our situations. We can no longer bear such incidents."

Mubarak watched the aftermath unfold on TV, his finger hovering over the red button, ready to send Egypt's special forces to Sudan to protect his citizens. Thankfully, he took his finger off the trigger. "Egypt does not tolerate those who hurt the dignity of its sons," he later told a televised address to parliament. "We don't want to be drawn into impulsive reactions. I am agitated too, but I restrain myself."

The transformation from a charged match with a place at South Africa 2010 at stake to the biggest international diplomatic incident sparked by a football match since the "Soccer War" between El Salvador and

# of all qualifiers

Honduras in 1969 was frighteningly quick. All in the space of seven crazy days, riots had broken out from Cairo to Marseille, while ambassadors in Khartoum and Algiers had been recalled and hundreds of fans – not to mention several Algerian players – had been left bloodied and scarred.

Things got so bad Libya's Colonel Gaddafi had to be called in to broker a peace deal between the two countries.

Five days before the crucial kick-off to the final group game in Cairo, the signs were not good. Thousands of angry Egypt fans had to be cleared away by riot police when it was announced that they had turned up for tickets on the wrong day, despite many having queued since dawn. In a country where corruption is rife – Egypt recently ranked 111th, along with Algeria, in Transparency International's 2009 Corruption Perception Index – the finger of suspicion immediately fell on the government and the Egyptian FA. The rumour went around that tickets were being hoarded and sold on the black market. Sure enough, when the fans arrived back the next day, tickets were changing hands for 10 times their face value.

It is difficult to quantify just how important this match was for many Egyptians. Their pride in the success of the Pharaohs in the

Fires of hate...Egypt fans set alight cans of insecticide near the Algerian embassy in Cairo while protesting after their team's play-off defeat

African Nations Cup is matched only by the shame of not making it to the World Cup finals since 1990. But the match also had the baggage of history. Egypt had to beat Algeria in Cairo to qualify for South Africa 2010 in almost exactly the same set of circumstances as two decades ago, before what was to become known as the "death match".

Egypt won 1-0 in 1989 in a game that was followed by riots and an unsavoury incident in which Algeria players attacked their Egypt counterparts. The Egypt team doctor lost an eye in the fight and the finger of blame was pointed at a former African Player of the Year, Lakhdar Belloumi, who, despite denying the charge, was sentenced to jail in his absence. An Interpol arrest warrant was issued straight after the game but, before the teams met in Algeria in June last year, a deal was struck between the two country's presidents to finally drop the charges.

Belloumi's rehabilitation was designed to close a chapter on a sorry incident in world football and also to dampen tensions between the two countries. However, efforts to take the sting out of the match failed. After squeezing past Zambia in October, a 3-0 victory for Egypt would ensure qualification for South Africa; a 2-0 win would mean a play-off. After the Egyptian FA cancelled the league programme to concentrate on the fixture, the resulting media vacuum was filled with war-like imagery, stoking tensions even further.

> **"The media has to take a lot of blame. Many newspapers are owned by people close to the regime who have a direct interest in fomenting hysteria to bolster the government's position. That is especially true in Egypt"**
>
> *The self-styled Moor Next Door gets to grips with the situation in a blog*

"The media has to take a lot of the blame for the popular sentiments in Algeria and Egypt," explained one blogger going by the name of the Moor Next Door, whose analysis of the fallout far outstripped that of the western media. "Many newspapers are owned by people close to the regime who have a direct interest in fomenting a kind of hysteria to bolster the government's position. That is especially true in Egypt."

Team bus pelted

As each day passed, disturbances broke out across Cairo. One afternoon saw Algeria fans who had travelled to Egypt gather outside the embassy to protest at their treatment and the fact that they had been given only 2,000 tickets. But the worst incident took place later that day, when the Algeria team bus was pelted with stones and bricks, and several windows were smashed, on the way from the airport.

Three players were injured in the attack – not that you would have guessed from the Egyptian newspapers the next morning. All blamed the Algerians, accusing the team of smashing the windows of their bus in the hope of securing a cancellation.

On the day of the match, Algeria fans had to be escorted under a hail of rocks and insults. "They threw stones at us and gave us the finger," recalled Attef Al Akhas, an Algeria fan based in Cairo who had travelled under convoy. His friends eagerly showed videos on their mobile phones of their vehicle being attacked minutes earlier. Others displayed cuts and bruises from flying glass. "Not all Egyptian fans are like this," he added. "It's the kids really."

By kick-off the Cairo International Stadium was a sea of Egyptian flags and filled with deafening song. The Algerian national anthem was drowned out, the white head bandages of the injured players embarrassingly conspicuous on the big screens. Within a few minutes Amr Zaki had put Egypt ahead, but it was Emad Moteab's looping header five minutes into injury time that secured the play-off in Sudan. Algeria had been halted just 30 seconds from the finishing line and the Egypt bench stormed the pitch as the crowd exploded in disbelief.

In happiness, violence followed. The Egyptian government later admitted that 20 Algerians had been injured in the aftermath, while the ripple of discontent spread across the world. On London's Edgware Road, famous for its Arab cafes, police were called to keep feuding Algeria and Egypt fans apart.

The conditions were ripe for trouble. Unemployment, poverty, corruption and deep unease at Mubarak's rule have created a frustration at the heart of Egyptian society with few options to release the pressure. But once the authorities had let the genie out of the bottle – and tried to use football to divert attention from its own failings – even the notoriously autocratic security forces couldn't get it back in.

And the aftermath in Sudan four days later? "The Egyptians...feel humiliated because their team lost, which is symptomatic of Egypt's wider decline in the Arab world and Africa over the last 20 years or so," was how The Moor Next Door saw it.

Somehow both Algeria and Egypt managed to deepen the rift of 1989. Now all eyes will be on January's African Nations Cup in Angola, where they could meet in the knockout stage.

The Egyptian FA has threatened to pull its teams out of international competition and FIFA called an emergency meeting to discuss its punishment for the Algerian team bus attack.

If they meet in Angola, Colonel Gaddafi will no doubt be sitting by the phone, just in case. ●

Picture: Corbis

Damage limitation...the smashed windows of the Algerian team bus tell their own story after the attack in which three players were hurt

Question of face...Egypt and Algeria players square up during the play-off

Border wars

Algeria triumphed in the World Cup play-off amid heightened tensions in the Sudanese capital

JAMES COPNALL in Khartoum

IT CAN'T BE EASY to focus on an extremely unusual World Cup play-off when you are worrying about security. After Algeria players were injured by stone-throwing Egypt fans in Cairo, 32 supporters from both sides were hurt in post-game clashes and Egyptian-owned businesses were attacked in Algiers in retaliation, safety was on everyone's mind in Sudan.

The Egypt team complained their bus was attacked shortly after its arrival in Khartoum, though thankfully no one was hurt. The Algerians holed up in their luxury hotel, a Libyan-built modern affair known locally as "Gaddafi's Egg" and became quite testy whenever they came across Egyptian journalists.

Meanwhile the fans poured into Khartoum. Egypt sent planes and some intrepid fans even travelled overland through the desert. This presumably was why the Egyptians had nominated Sudan as their neutral venue should a play-off be needed. Algeria went for its fellow former French north African colony, Tunisia, but Sudan was drawn out of a hat.

The Algerians chartered at least 48 planes for their fans. The usually rather staid streets of Khartoum echoed to the sounds of car horns as cavalcades of supporters celebrated in the build-up to the game. The Sudanese were clearly supporting Algeria, thanks to a dose of anti-Egyptian feeling, and Egyptian support for Chad in a Chad-Sudan game held in Cairo in September 2008.

The numbers of fans and the heated atmosphere between the two countries were of grave concern to the Sudanese authorities. Things got even more tense when the president of the Algerian football federation accused his Egyptian counterpart of responsibility for the incidents in Cairo and refused to shake his hand.

Sudan announced a comprehensive set of security measures for the game, to be played a few miles outside Khartoum's city centre at Omurdman. The Al Merreikh stadium's 42,000 capacity would be reduced to 35,000, with the Algeria fans at one end getting 9,000 tickets, the same number going to Egypt supporters, and 17,000 left to the Sudanese in the middle. Around 15,000 policemen were to be on duty and hospitals were on full alert, too.

> **"Compared to pre-match fears, the game passed with relatively little incident on the pitch. The same couldn't be said about the atmosphere"**

The Sudanese tickets had largely been sold on to the visiting fans, but the rival sets were kept well apart. VIPs and journalists had to force their way into an over-packed stadium and some ticketless Sudanese fans were dispersed using tear gas.

Compared to the pre-match fears, the game passed with relatively little incident on the pitch. The same couldn't be said about the atmosphere. Algerians lit newspapers, sending flames spluttering into the night sky; Egyptians waved their black, white and red flags. The noise was deafening.

Algeria had the better of a testy first half, though left-back Nadir Belhadj probably should have been sent off. He already had a yellow card when he kicked Ahmed Al Muhamadi, but the referee chose to warn both men.

Algeria, with Karim Ziani and Mourad Meghni pulling the strings in midfield, broke the deadlock when the Egyptian defence failed to deal with Ziani's ball into the area and Antar Yahia volleyed home off the bar.

Egypt coach Hassan Shehata rang the changes at half-time and his side had the better of the second period. But when they did breach a rearguard ably marshalled by Madjid Bougherra, goalkeeper Faouzi Chaouchi – playing because first choice Lounes Gaouaoui was suspended – kept them at bay.

At the final whistle Algeria's players sank to the turf or ran towards their fans, who let off flares. Some players sat on the crossbar leading the cheers.

Afterwards, coach Rabah Saadane spoke of the great joy the qualification for a first World Cup finals since 1986 had brought to the country and hoped it would encourage the authorities to find better solutions to the numerous problems faced by young Algerians.

Many of those ran riot after the game. At least six Egyptian buses were pelted with stones and a trail of broken glass led up Africa Road, near Khartoum airport. Egypt's information minister said 21 fans had been slightly injured, though his nation's press blew it into a massacre of epic proportions.

The Sudanese police struggled to deal with the worst excesses of Algerians undoubtedly motivated by revenge for the incidents in Egypt. But it is also true violence has become a sad fact of life in Algerian football, a reflection of a troubled society after the brutal civil war in the 1990s. ●

Derbi dilemma

Defeat by Barcelona in *el clasico* could yet prove to be the turning point of Real Madrid's season

"THERE ARE defeats and there are defeats," claimed Xabi Alonso. And then there are defeats that appear not to be defeats at all. Defeats like Real Madrid's at Camp Nou by Barcelona. Defeats like the one that came in the match billed as the greatest club contest of all time. The defeat that should have buried Madrid but seemed to revive them. The defeat that took away the league leadership but gave them something back in return.

Barcelona versus Real Madrid: unique treble winners against the most expensive side in Spanish football history, with the neo galacticos built at a cost of over £210million. The most glamorous *clasico* ever was shown live at cinemas all over the country for the first time and with the leadership up for grabs for the first time in 25 years.

In the end, Madrid lost it to Zlatan Ibrahimovic's goal but you could be forgiven for thinking that they'd won it. Not least because they nearly had.

Nearly is not normally good enough, you might say, but this time it was. For some, at least.

Intense, dramatic, absorbing and unexpected, *el clasico* lived up to its billing – a game that the newspaper *El País* described as "superlative"; the kind of game where it felt like nothing quite made sense. Up against 11 men, Madrid controlled Barcelona; up against 10 following Sergio Busquets' sending-off, they lost control. With a man less, Barcelona began to get men free. In the final minute it was a Barca defender who was screeching up the wing looking for goals, even though it was his team who were leading by a solitary goal and were a man down.

Madrid, who had been characterised all season by their ability to deliver a knockout blow, even when on the ropes, suddenly found that their right hook failed them. Barca, who had danced nimbly and exchanged quick jabs but occasionally failed to floor their opponent, suddenly found unexpected resistance and stamina – not to mention a thumping counterpunch.

Cristiano Ronaldo was supposed to be the hero, the man that would win it. Instead, his first-half miss, with the goal gaping, might have lost it. As for his battle with Leo Messi, well, the Argentinian wasted a wonderful chance, too. Ibrahimovic began on the bench, not fully fit, but came on to score the winner with a wonderful volley from Dani Alves' cross. Karim Benzema called it the game of his life, but only appeared as a sub and fluffed his best opportunity. "It was the good players who got it wrong," muttered one columnist.

Ronaldo, Messi, Xavi, Kaka, Alonso, Andres Iniesta...some of the world's smoothest talents were on display, yet the night's heroes were defenders. Indeed, the man of the match was a rugged, shaggy-haired centre-back who is more heart than head: Barcelona captain Carles Puyol. Yet that didn't make it a defensive stalemate.

Triumph in Madrid

The author and poet Rudyard Kipling urged us to meet the twin impostors of triumph and despair in exactly the same way, and what might have been met as despair was heralded as if it was a triumph in Madrid.

When Madrid returned from Barcelona a year ago, having lost 2-0, the cover of *AS* cheered: "Madrid are back", while one commentator opted for the headline: "The pride of champions." Realmadrid.com had awarded them a "perfect 10".

The reason for such optimism back then was simple. Madrid had been defensive, aggressive and defeated but, off the back of a crisis, under a new manager and seemingly in terminal decline, they had proved there was life yet. Having lost four of the previous five, Madrid then kept the title alive with an extraordinary run of 16 wins in 17 games – until Barcelona came to the Bernabeu and dispatched them 6-2.

This time, the situation was different. Madrid arrived at Camp Nou as league leaders but the reaction was similar. Madrid had been beaten 1-0 but the headline on the front of *Marca* declared it a defeat that "tasted like victory". Its editorial explained: "Rarely has a defeat left such a good taste in the mouth. Madrid managed to make the fearful 'Pep Team' look small. Madrid deserved much more and proved that Barcelona clearly are not what they once were. This is a moral triumph that is worth much more than three points."

> **"Rarely has a defeat left such a good taste in the mouth. Madrid managed to make the fearful 'Pep Team' look small. This was a moral triumph worth much more than three points"**
>
> *Marca's editorial oozes lyrical despite Madrid's defeat at Camp Nou*

Coach Manuel Pellegrini agreed, saying: "We deserved at the very, very least a draw. We were the better side in almost everything."

It was about time. And that was the point. Madrid went into week 12 on top of the table, having lost just once. They came out of week 12 in second having been beaten again. But the progress, almost everyone agreed, was evident.

Although Madrid had been winning up until then, no one was convinced. Their football was flat and there was little of the excellence promised by the arrival of the galacticos. Pellegrini was in trouble. They were top of the table but had been humiliated 4-0 by Second Division B side Alcorcon in the Spanish Cup and the media said he had been given the ultimatum: improve, or you're out.

Madrid improved. "Madrid found football," said the headline on the front of *AS*. Barcelona made strikingly few chances. "I've never seen them create so little," insisted Pellegrini. It was not because Madrid defended like a lowly adversary as they had the year before, either. Instead, Barca made few chances because the Madrid midfield denied them space, pressuring high, robbing the ball and springing quickly.

The best chances were Real Madrid's, but Ronaldo wasted his.

Clash of the Titans...Real Madrid's Gonzalo Higuain goes sprawling under a challenge from Barcelona's matchwinner Ibrahimovic

I don't believe it...Ronaldo is horrified after missing a simple chance to put Madrid ahead

Puyol made three extraordinary blocks and goalkeeper Victor Valdes was extremely sharp.

Madrid had not convinced before. Now, at last, they did. "This is a different story," wrote Eduardo Inda. "For the first time all season there was order, tactical clarity and a team that took the game to their rival."

The trouble is, if Madrid couldn't convince when they were winning nor could they win when they were convincing. Ibrahimovic came on and opened the scoring. Within two minutes, Madrid were handed a lifeline when Busquets was sent off. But something had changed; they couldn't take advantage. Madrid made chances, but so too did Barcelona. Messi, Eric Abidal and Gerard Pique could all have scored. It was now Barcelona who carried the game to Madrid just as much as the other way round.

Uncomfortable truths

Madrid had improved, they had also impressed, but there were one or two uncomfortable truths to face too; not least the fact that Barcelona's do-or-die week had very definitely gone the way of do. They had defeated Internazionale in the Champions League and now Real Madrid; while Madrid, according to their critics, had faced just three decent teams – Milan, Sevilla and Barcelona – and lost to all of them.

Against Barcelona there were positive signs for the rest of the season, but there were familiar failings too. "Madrid were superb in the first half, just as they were in the first half in Milan and against Racing," insisted one pundit. "Yes," came the reply. "In the first half." It would be no exaggeration to say that, 20 games into the season, they have not yet played 90 good minutes. Besides, asked others, what is the point of spending £210m to play as a counter-attacking team? Isn't that what small teams do? Where's the bravado, the ambition?

"Madrid were much better," said former captain Manolo Sanchis. "But it worries me how impotent they were when they had to take the initiative."

"We leave here satisfied," insisted Madrid's director general Jorge Valdano. They also left defeated. ●

> **"Madrid were much better, but it worries me how impotent they were when they had to take the initiative"**
>
> *Ex-Madrid captain Manolo Sanchis*

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Swiss multinationals

Switzerland's success at the Under-17 World Cup was a victory for a team drawn from many different backgrounds

Swiss jewels...the Under-17 squad celebrate their triumph in Nigeria

SWITZERLAND

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Berne

AROUND 20 PER CENT of Switzerland's 7.3 million inhabitants are foreign, yet the country's record on race relations is not one of which it can always be proud. Even today there are occasional cases of non-white foreign tourists being refused service in hotels and restaurants, while the country also tolerates the sort of right-wing propaganda which would be banned in most European nations.

In 2007 the Swiss People's Party (SVP) produced posters featuring a black sheep kicking a white sheep off a Swiss flag, and it has also instigated a referendum on whether the country's mosques should be allowed to build minarets – only a handful of Swiss mosques currently have them.

The SVP is in favour of a ban and, to make its point, has stuck up posters featuring a burka-clad woman against a backdrop of minarets, which have been drawn to look like missiles, all standing on a Swiss flag.

It was against this background that a multicultural Switzerland team won the Under-17 World Cup in Nigeria – and with perfect timing as their astonishing triumph came just two weeks before the referendum on minarets was due to be held.

More than half the players come from immigrant backgrounds, including asylum seekers. They emerged victorious from the tournament after beating Brazil, Germany, Italy and, in the Final, hosts Nigeria. It was the first time Switzerland had won a world championship at any age level.

"This is unbelievable!" exclaimed tabloid newspaper *Blick*. "Our multicultural team's performances on the AstroTurf must even fill the most conservative of Swiss People's Party voters with pride."

It was difficult to tell whether *Blick* was right as the SVP – possibly remembering the trouble that Jean-Marie Le Pen got into with his comments about the France side having too many coloured players – decided to stay quiet on the subject.

Every member of the squad was born and educated in Switzerland, but 12 of them also hold dual nationality and are still entitled to play for the countries of their parents' birth.

These include playmaker Nassim Ben Khalifa, whose parents come from Tunisa, and the team's leading scorer Haris Seferovic, who grabbed the only goal in the Final and is also eligible to play for Bosnia. The other players with immigrant backgrounds are Pajtim Kasami (Macedonia), Granit Xhaka (Albania), Kofi Nimeley (Ghana), Joel Kiassumbua (Congo), Andre Goncalves (Portugal), Ricardo Rodriguez (Chile), Igor Mijatovic (Serbia), Frederic Veseli (Kosovo), Maik Nakic (Croatia) and Sead Hajrovic (Bosnia).

Despite Switzerland having only 200,000 registered players – and the fact that football has to vie with ice hockey for popularity – their win in Nigeria was by no means an accident.

They won the European Championship at the same age level in 2002 with a squad that included Philippe Senderos and Tranquillo Barnetta, who both went on to become regular full internationals.

> **When we started out in 1995 there were five or six professional coaches in youth football. Today there are 80**
>
> *Switzerland youth coaching supremo Hansruedi Hasler*

Impressive scheme

Since 1995 the country has run one of Europe's most impressive youth development schemes under the leadership of Hansruedi Hasler, a former coach of Swiss lower league sides Grenchen and Biel-Bienne.

Hasler laid down the guidelines encouraging every professional club to employ a certain number of full-time youth coaches, with financial support from the Swiss Football Federation.

"The clubs really are the cornerstone," says Hasler. "They have had to improve youth development in recent years. We spend £2.6million each year on this project.

"These are incredibly important factors, without which we would not be where we are today. When we started the scheme there were five or six professional coaches in youth football. Today there are 80."

Fulham manager Roy Hodgson, who coached Switzerland at the 1994 World Cup, also played his part by demanding that all national youth sides adopt his 4-4-2 system, something which remains intact today.

Of course, winning an Under-17 championship does not guarantee success at senior international level. And there are two ways it can go wrong. One is that their players could get snapped up by big European clubs, where they will then struggle to get a game and find themselves loaned from club to club. Secondly, the players with dual nationality could be lured to play for the countries of their parents' birth. FIFA rules allow them to switch allegiances until they have played a competitive senior international.

With this in mind, Switzerland coach Ottmar Hitzfeld would be advised to make his move quickly. ●

Race against time...the stadium in Benguela

Angola awaits

The 2010 African Nations Cup will provide a useful indication of the continent's challenge at the World Cup

CAMEROON AND Ivory Coast head the list of favourites for the African Nations Cup as they seek a major morale boost before launching what they hope will be a credible challenge at the World Cup in South Africa.

January's tournament in Angola will offer five of the 2010 World Cup sides the chance of competitive match practice, though the likes of Algeria, Ghana and Nigeria carry a less credible chance of winning the continental title.

Egypt, who are seeking a record-breaking third successive title, will have the added incentive of using the competition to make up for the bitter disappointment of failing to make the World Cup finals after losing to Algeria in a play-off.

The Ivorians' powerful line-up is carried by the charisma of Didier Drogba, while Cameroon already have a proven record at the Nations Cup. The Indomitable Lions emerged from a disastrous start at the last finals to reach the Final in Accra, where they lost to Egypt by a single goal. Samuel Eto'o continues to be the talisman of a side whose self-confident swagger lost none of its lustre, even when they were struggling through the early stages of the World Cup qualifiers.

The spotlight in Angola will shine as brightly on the superstars like Drogba, Eto'o, Emmanuel Adebayor, Michael Essien and Seydou Keita of Barcelona as it will on the top teams.

The African game remains dominated by the personalities creating success at club level in Europe. Their return to the continent almost overshadows the overall spectacle of the Nations Cup, but it is on the back of these personalities that television revenue now allows the Confederation of African Football (CAF) a budget some 10 times bigger than a decade ago.

Established countries

Angola has been a tricky choice as host but represents a return to the philosophy of using the Nations Cup to build infrastructure across the continent. Burkina Faso in 1998 and Mali in 2002 were good example of this, but a lack of potential candidates saw the tournament held in established countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Ghana over the last three editions.

However, in 2012 it will go to Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, where facilities are as spartan as those expected in Angola.

> **"Angola has been a tricky choice but represents a return to the philosophy of using the Nations Cup to help build infrastructure across the continent"**

An estimated £600million has been spent by the oil-rich Angolans on the infrastructure for this tournament, with four new Chinese-built stadiums springing up in Benguela, Cabinda, Luanda and Lubango.

But they will only be finished on the eve of the event if the Luanda experience is anything to go by. A November opening had been planed for the 40,000-seater, with Ghana invited for the festivities, but the scheduled international had to be switched to a suburban venue because the stadium was not ready.

The stadia in Cabinda, a northern enclave surrounded by Congo, and the other two southern venues are much smaller, with capacities of 25,000, and are situated in areas with little in the way of hotels and other facilities.

Angola is also notoriously expensive. Hotel prices, for example, around the time of the Nations Cup are already being quoted in the £250-£300 range. This means there is little, or even no chance, of any outside support.

But hosting the event is a massive fillip for a country embroiled in decades of destructive civil war and which is now slowly rebuilding on the back of its oil revenue. Rampant corruption has slowed the process, but Angola is still seen as a fertile land of much potential.

Angola were surprise 2006 World Cup finalists but crashed out early in the 2010 process. Portuguese coach Manuel Jose was brought in nine months before these finals to sort out a side whose profile and potential is a little under the radar, and whose only hope is to ride the wave of public adulation that might come with some early wins.

A relatively easy opening-round group also gives the team a chance of making it through to the quarter-finals. But it is the form sides like Cameroon and the Ivorians who deservedly command the status of tournament favourites.

Past Nations Cups on the eve of the World Cup have suffered from a lack of resonance, overshadowed by the impending world championship and it is even more pronounced this year with South Africa due to host world football's showpiece in June.

But the unique foibles and joys of the Nations Cup still make it an event not to be missed. ●

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Time for Totti?

The Roma forward is back in form – and sparking debate over an international return

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

WHAT A DIFFERENCE a goal makes. Or, in the case of Francesco Totti, what a difference three goals make. Back on the pitch in late November for Roma's home game against Bari – following a 49-day absence since scoring both Roma goals in a 2-1 home win over Napoli – *il capitano* claimed all three goals in the space of just 28 minutes in a convincing 3-1 victory.

In this World Cup season, Totti's hat-trick was all that was required to restart speculation that, come May, Italy coach Marcello Lippi will decide to call up the 33-year-old for the finals in South Africa.

Totti's form this season is certainly impressive. He currently lies joint-second in the Serie A goalscoring chart (behind Udinese's Antonio Di Natale) on nine goals, while his hat-trick against Bari was his third this season, following trebles against Slovak side Kosice and Belgian club Gent in the qualifying rounds of the Europa League. With 187 Serie A goals to his name, Totti is currently at seventh in the all-time scorers' list.

Certainly, his goals against Bari would give anyone pause for thought. In particular, the third goal – a long-range, left-foot drive from a prohibitive angle – was the sort of strike which prompted Roma's experienced coach Claudio Ranieri to exclaim: "But that was a goal just out of this world. I found myself shouting out: 'How in the name of the devil did he do it?'"

One week later, talking at the launch of his new website, Totti confirmed that even if he has not played for Italy since winning the World Cup Final against France in Berlin three years ago, a dramatic late return cannot be excluded.

"I have an excellent relationship with Lippi," he said. "When it gets to April, May time I will talk to him and we'll see what my state of fitness is. I meet all the old Italy team-mates when I play against them and my impression is that all the team veterans would like to see me return."

Another player for whom a goal – or in his case, two – could yet make a fundamental difference is Milan striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar, who appeared for the last six minutes of their game away to Catania. Despite dominating possession, Milan had been resolutely shut out by a very dour and defensive Catania. However, the 26-year-old Huntelaar combined brilliantly with veteran Pippo Inzaghi to score twice in time added-on to win the game 2-0 and move Milan into second place in Serie A, admittedly a full seven points behind champions and runaway leaders, city rivals, Internazionale.

If Totti's third goal against Bari was good, so too was Huntelaar's second goal against Catania, as the Dutchman chipped Catania's Argentinian goalkeeper Mariano Andujar from the edge of the area.

In the space of six minutes, Huntelaar bounced from being a £12million ex-Real Madrid also-ran, who was due to be offloaded during the January transfer window, to one of the brightest hopes for the rest of Milan's season. With compatriot Clarence Seedorf, Brazilian master Ronaldinho and English veteran David Beckham (back on loan from Los Angeles Galaxy) to lay on the supplies for the front men, it may turn out that the Catania game did indeed represent an all-important watershed in Hunterlaar's Milan experience.

Internal problems

In truth, though, it is Inter who are making all the headlines. Indeed, so dominant do they appear on the home front, they seem to need to create internal problems all of their own to enliven matters for themselves. At least, that is one unkind explanation for the tensions between the club's talented striker Mario Balotelli and coach Jose Mourinho.

In the build-up to Inter's game away to Juventus at the beginning of December, Mourinho seemed keen to discipline his talented attacker, ordering him to train with the reserve team, allegedly as punishment for a lack of punctuality at training. When Mourinho left the 19-year-old out of the side for Inter's 1-0 home win over Fiorentina in late November, the Portuguese coach became annoyed with the excessive media attention to the "dropping" of the striker, asking Sky Italia viewers just who was Balotelli to merit such attention.

> **"I have an excellent relationship with Lippi. When it gets to April, May time I will talk to him and see what the state of my fitness is"**
>
> *Totti has not ruled out a return*

The point about Balotelli, however, is that not only is he a talented player but, unwittingly, he has also become an iconic one too. In the build-up to the Juventus game, there was endless speculation that the match might have to be "suspended" if Balotelli were to (again) become the object of racist abuse from the Juventus fans.

Balotelli was born to a Ghanian couple but adopted at the age of three by the Balotelli family from Bagnolo Mella, near Brescia. Since his arrival on the big time, he has occasionally been the object of racist abuse from opposing fans.

The first serious incident came last April when Juventus were forced to play a Serie A game behind closed doors by way of punishment for their fans' chants at Balotelli during their home game against Inter. It seems that the better Balotelli plays, the more he annoys some opposing fans.

At the time he showed a deal of common sense, dismissing the chants and commenting: "I'm more Italian than those idiots."

However, by late November, the Balotelli "problem" was back. On one crazy weekend, the young Inter striker managed to attract ugly chants at two different matches being played hundreds of miles apart. At Inter's away game with Bologna and, even more perversely, during Juve's home match with Udinese, he was once again the object of abuse: *"Se saltelli/ Muore Balotelli"* (if you jump up and down, then Balotelli dies).

Juventus picked up a fine – this time a rather derisory £17,000 – but

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any hope that the minority of Juventus fans responsible for the chants might have learned their lesson seemed to go out the window when Juventus travelled to Bordeaux for their next game, a midweek Champions League tie which saw the Old Lady roundly beaten 2-0. As the teams warmed up prior to that game, the *"saltelli/ Balotelli"* chant started up again.

Experienced players like Livorno striker Cristiano Lucarelli and Milan midfielder Seedorf have argued that the issue has been blown out of proportion. Both men suggest that the chants are not racist but merely the expression of football fan rivalry.

Lucarelli, who is Italian and white, says he has been abused for 15 years in Italy because of his well-known leftist political sympathies.

Holland international Seedorf, who is black and was born in Surinam, says Italy "is not a racist country", adding that Balotelli could help himself and others by avoiding a tendency to provocative gestures – he stuck his tongue out at the Juventus fans in Turin last April, for example.

Like Totti's potential Italy recall and Huntelaar's new-found confidence, one suspects that this will be a story that will run and run. ●

Pick me...who fancies Totti to make it into the *Azzurri* World Cup squad?

Long haul...Thai fans will be praying Robson stays longer than his predecessor

Qualifications required

New boss Bryan Robson knows exactly what is expected of him in his latest job

THAILAND

MICHAEL CHURCH

Since arriving in Bangkok in October, Thailand's new boss, Bryan Robson, has repeatedly been asked the same question.

"There have been quite a few people asking me how long do I intend to stay," says the former Manchester United and England captain. "But I think it's always got to work both ways. If the Thai FA are happy with me and I'm happy with them, and things are going well, then I can see me staying here quite a while."

The previous coach, Peter Reid, quit after a year to become Stoke City's assistant manager and Thai fans are wondering if Robson might be seeking the same route back to employment in England. But the ex-Middlesbrough, Bradford City, West Bromwich Albion and Sheffield United manager's arrival has at least shown that the capture of Reid – a major publicity coup for Thai football at the time – was no flash in the pan. By convincing a man of Robson's reputation to take over as national coach in a country besotted by all things relating to English football, Football Association of Thailand president Worawi Makudi has succeeded in keeping the profile of the Thai game at an all-time high.

Robson will be asked to do much the same as Reid: namely, to reach the finals of the Asian Cup in Qatar in 2011 and then focus on a first-ever qualification for the World Cup.

It's a tough challenge for a nation that, while dominating at Southeast Asian level, has rarely come close to troubling the continent's top sides. They have progressed beyond the group stage of the Asian Cup just once – in 1972, when they were hosts – and have never made the World Cup finals.

Change, though, is afoot. For years, one of the biggest problems was the lack of a professional domestic league. While clubs such as Thai Farmers Bank and BEC Tero Sasana were successful at continental level, there was little in the way of cohesion or structure to domestic competition. League football centred either on the area surrounding Bangkok – where company and government teams dominated – or on a separate provincial set-up.

> "If the Thai FA are happy with me and I'm happy with them, I can see me staying here quite a while"
>
> *Thailand coach Bryan Robson*

But all that changed in 2007 when the two leagues merged. Thai Premier League clubs are no longer linked with government entities, banks or the like and are now stand-alone organisations – and, as a result, interest in the league has increased significantly throughout the country.

"One of the major reasons for the success of the 2009 season was that we now have closer communication between the club and the fans," said Ronnarit Suewaja, general manager of newly crowned champions Muang Thong United.

However, the perceived lack of a professional and commercial approach by the league saw Thai clubs excluded from the newly revamped Asian Champions League at the start of the 2009 season and it remains to be seen whether Muang Thong United will be offered a place in the 2010 tournament.

Abroad...Suksomkit

Enticed overseas

Meanwhile, as Thailand's club sides progress along the road to professionalism, the country's best players are still being enticed overseas.

Vietnam and Singapore have been the destinations of choice for the majority of Thailand's internationals in recent years but, increasingly, the cash on offer from Indonesia's booming professional league has now become an additional lure.

Three members of Robson's squad – Kosin Hathairattanakool, Suchao Nutnum and Pipat Thonkanya – joined clubs in Indonesia in the latter half of 2009, while Surat Sukha and Sutee Suksomkit have signed for Australian side Melbourne Victory.

With at least half of his side playing their club football outside Thailand, and more looking to chase the larger salaries on offer elsewhere in the region, Robson's task is going to be anything but straightforward.

The complexities of his job were summed up perfectly in his first two games in charge: a fine 3-1 Asian Cup qualifying win away to Singapore, followed by a disappointing 1-0 loss in the return in Bangkok four days later. ●

Cruyff back in business

The Dutchman has agreed to coach Catalonia's "national" side as they seek wider approval within the world game

Stand by your man...Casals (left) introduces Catalonia's new coach

CATALONIA

STEVE MENARY in Barcelona

"ARE YOU A nationalist?" asks Jordi Casals with a smile. For once the Catalonia Football Federation (FCF) president does not require the services of a translator.

Casals is responding to the question of why Catalonia are not prepared to settle for just playing matches with other Spanish regions and why the homeland of Barcelona needs Johan Cruyff as its head coach.

The FCF was founded in 1904 but Catalonia games were very sporadic until the death of General Franco. The demise of the Spanish head of state in 1975 led to the establishment of 17 autonomous regions, with each allowed to set up their own "national" team – and the FCF embraced the idea with more enthusiasm than most.

However, until Catalonia is a member of the United Nations it cannot apply for membership of FIFA or UEFA and that means no European or World Cup qualifiers. Instead, the Catalans are restricted to a couple of friendly games a year at best. Fixtures – which can only be arranged when there are no La Liga games or Spain internationals – are usually played in late May or during La Liga's Christmas break. Nevertheless, stars such as Xavi and Carles Puyol of Barcelona, and Sergio Gonzalez of Deportivo La Coruna, have been only too happy to turn out in Catalonia colours for well-attended games at Camp Nou.

In December 2008, Catalonia beat Colombia 2-1 after losing to Argentina's Olympic team in May. However, neither of these sides are now deemed big enough opponents.

In 2008 the Catalans agreed to play the Basques and the Galicians in a deal known as the San Mames Accord, but this was not signed by Casals, who only took over as FCF president last summer – and on a mandate to seek even greater international recognition.

"A three-way tournament [with the Basques and Galicians] would be possible," says Casals as he sits flanked by two of his press team in the FCF office near Barcelona Nord transport terminus. "But what's really important is to promote the Catalan team and we want teams in the FIFA top 10."

Securing the sort of high-profile games that Casals desires is why he was desperate for Barcelona legend Cruyff to return to management. Thirteen years after the Dutchman's last coaching post, he was unveiled as Catalonia's new boss in November and, despite the short notice, a prestigious friendly against Argentina was arranged for December 22.

> **We will try to bring some countries [to Catalonia] before the World Cup and play against them**
>
> *FCF president Jordi Casals*

Dutch legend

The 62-year-old Cruyff – who was a European Cup winner as a player and coach, and appeared for Catalonia during his playing days – still lives in Barcelona and is on good terms with Barca's president, Joan Laporta.

"For this reason we have Mr Cruyff as manager," says Casals, who has realistic plans for Catalonia to mix more regularly with football's elite.

"If we have a manager that is not known, it is not so easy. But he can phone up [Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger] about Cesc [Fabregas] or speak to [FIFA president Sepp] Blatter and [UEFA president Michel] Platini.

"We will try to bring some countries here before the World Cup next year and play against them."

Barcelona benefited from massive investment to stage the 1992 Olympic Games and the city is not short of top-class training facilities.

With these and the Camp Nou available, Catalonia would be a popular venue for a pre-World Cup training camp for many nations. Quite how Cruyff would secure the release of those Catalans in Spain's World Cup squad is not yet apparent. Even so, having got his first-choice manager, Jordi Casals can but dream. ●

United nation...Catalonia (above) beat Colombia in December 2008

The great divide

Reunification has done little to achieve parity between clubs in the east and west of the country

TWENTY YEARS after the Berlin Wall crumbled and heralded German reunification, most football clubs from the former DDR have the look of flowers in the desert. Energie Cottbus' play-off defeat by Nurnberg in May removed the last trace of eastern representation in the Bundesliga and all the ex-Oberliga giants – Dynamo Dresden, Carl Zeiss Jena, 1.FC Magdeburg, Lokomotiv Leipzig, et al – now live a hand-to-mouth existence in the third, fourth and fifth tiers of the domestic system.

Certain eastern outfits have done themselves justice in the top flight. Cottbus and their band of cut-price Balkan and Brazilian buys did amazingly well to survive for a half-a-dozen years in the Bundesliga of the new millennium, while Hansa Rostock punched above their weight for a decade, finishing sixth in 1996 and 1998. Nonetheless, swimming against the tide is only possible for so long. Deprived of the financial resources which sides in the west take for granted, the *Ossis* (East Germans) were always going to struggle.

In the good old/bad old days, the east's footballing finest were bankrolled by branches of the state. Dynamo Berlin – who won 10 straight titles between 1979 and 1988, many by apparently dubious means – were funded by the Stasi, the much-loathed secret police, Dynamo Dresden were also a police team and Lokomotiv Leipzig were backed by the railways. However, once the Wall fell and free-market economics swept in, the safety net was gone and, with the economy in these parts in precarious shape, making ends meet became a daily dilemma.

And it still is. Germany may be back together as an administrative whole but, economically, east and west remain poles apart. Unemployment in the east is close to double that of the west and the gross national product per person in the east is still only 70 per cent of a westerner. Given a choice between investing in the west or the east, the would-be sponsor looks to the former every time.

While the sight of Dynamo Berlin scratching around in the fourth division could be construed as divine retribution, not so the decline of other East German powerhouses; they only provoke pity.

Twenty five years ago, Magdeburg beat Milan in the Final of the 1974 European Cup-winners Cup – the DDR's first and last continental trophy – and local hero Jurgen Sparwasser scored the national team's historic goal in the 1-0 win against West Germany in that year's World Cup finals. In 1981, Carl Zeiss Jena also reached the Cup-winners Cup Final, though they went down 2-1 to Dinamo Tbilisi.

Equally depressing

The story in Leipzig is equally depressing. The city, whose 46,000-capacity Zentralstadion was the only eastern venue used during the 2006 World Cup, is enjoying something of a boom thanks to the arrival of BMW and Porsche factories. But on the football front, the best the Saxon metropolis can do is two sides – Lokomotiv and FC Sachsen – in the fifth division. Sachsen were declared insolvent early last year and were demoted a division, while Lok, runners-up to Ajax in the 1987 European Cup-winners Cup, have twice gone bankrupt (1999 and 2003).

However, an Austrian-based energy-drink company could be the saviour of football in Leipzig. Already the owner of clubs in Austria, USA and Brazil, Red Bull recently bought SSV Markranstadt, a fifth division club in the suburbs of the city, and the rebranded RB Leipzig recruited a clutch of second division players last summer, including the former Germany defender Ingo Herzsch.

They are not to everyone's taste, however. Like Hoffenheim in the

Little eastern promise...former Oberliga foes Dynamo Dresden (in yellow) and Carl Zeiss Jena compete in a mundane third division fixture this season

Bundesliga, they are regarded as artificially inseminated upstarts and some opposition fans were sufficiently angry to spray their home turf with herbicide and plant a wooden cross as a symbol of the death of the traditional club ideal.

Another ray of hope for the *Ossis* is Union Berlin. For so long the poor relations of Dynamo, Union won the third division title last season and are now pushing hard for a second consecutive promotion.

It's easy to understand why many Germans see a reunited nation as the footballing equivalent of a derby match that is won 10-0 by the west every season.

Every prospect that has been unearthed in the east – Matthias Sammer, Thomas Doll, Ulf Kirsten, Andreas Thom, Michael Ballack, Bernd Schneider and, more recently, the Bayer Leverkusen pair of keeper Rene Adler and midfielder Toni Kroos – have all headed for the lucrative west at the first opportunity. And the drain of talent does not look likely to end any time soon.

> **"Germany may be back together as an administrative whole but, economically, east and west remain poles apart"**

"We simply cannot compete," says Magdeburg youth team coach Mirko Eichentopf. "The big clubs from the west target our best 13- and 14-year-olds, offering cash to their parents, sometimes a job too.

"In this part of Germany, where unemployment is high and there is a lot of poverty. It's hard to resist."

Meanwhile, after heavily fining Italy striker Luca Toni and Germany full-back Philipp Lahm for breaches of club code, the powers that be at Bayern Munich probably would appreciate some old-style DDR player discipline at the moment.

Furious at being substituted at half-time during the 1-1 home draw with Schalke, Toni immediately stormed out of the stadium, while Lahm found himself in the dog house for a most untypical press tirade – one in which he railed against the club's scatter-gun approach to the transfer market and its lack of long-term planning compared to its Champions League rivals.

Both of which put more pressure on the increasingly-beleaguered coach, Louis Van Gaal, and provide further scope for the FC Hollywood tag line. ●

THE WINNERS WorldSoccer

LIONEL MESSI and Barcelona were the clear winners of *World Soccer's* 2009 Awards, triumphing in three out of four categories, including the World Player of the Year award.

Messi is the first Argentinian to win *World Soccer's* World Player award since Diego Maradona in 1986. However, it was his performances for Barcelona, notably in the Champions League Final victory over Manchester United in Rome, which sealed his victory.

Messi was the clear winner, ahead of his team-mates Andres Iniesta and Xavi. By finishing one, two and three in the Player of the Year voting, Messi, Iniesta and Xavi emulated the 1988 feat of Milan trio Marco Van Basten, Ruud Gullit and Frank Rijkaard.

Barcelona dominate this year's awards. They won a staggering 75 per cent of the vote in the Team of the Year category – the highest proportion of the vote for a winner in the 28-year history of the *World Soccer* awards.

After just one season in charge of Barcelona, Pep Guardiola was voted Manager of the Year, a clear winner ahead of Wolfsburg coach Felix Magath and Manchester United's Alex Ferguson.

Only Sergio Aguero of Atletico Madrid, winner of the Young Player award, prevented a complete sweep by Barcelona. He saw off competition from Alexandre Pato and Stevan Jovetic.

Spanish football performed strongly, with the national side finishing second to Barcelona in the Team category and David Villa and Fernando Torres finishing sixth and eighth respectively in the Player of the Year voting.

Votes were cast from a total of 44 different countries – including Sweden, Thailand and Japan – to once again emphasise the global nature of the *World Soccer* awards.

LIONEL MESSI
World Player of the Year

PEP GUARDIOLA
World Manager of the Year

SERGIO AGUERO
Young Player of the Year

BARCELONA
World Team of the Year

AWARDS 2009

HOW YOU VOTED

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

		% of votes
1	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	43.2
2	Andres Iniesta (Barcelona & Spain)	21.5
3	Xavi (Barcelona & Spain)	11.2
4	Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United/Real Madrid & Portugal)	6.4
5	Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Internazionale/Barcelona & Sweden)	4.2
6	David Villa (Valencia & Spain)	2.5
7	Diego Forlan (Atletico Madrid & Uruguay)	2.1
8	Fernando Torres (Liverpool & Spain)	1.3
9	Wayne Rooney (Manchester United & England)	0.8
10	Didier Drogba (Chelsea & Ivory Coast)	0.5
	Others	6.3

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR

1	Barcelona	75.9
2	Spain	8.3
3	Brazil	3.8
4	North Korea	2.7
5	Wolfsburg	1.5
6	Estudiantes	1.4
7	Manchester United	1.3
8	England	0.8
9	Real Madrid	0.6
10	Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.3
	Others	3.4

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

1	Pep Guardiola (Barcelona)	62.1
2	Felix Magath (Wolfsburg/Schalke)	9.7
3	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	5.3
4	Laurent Blanc (Bordeaux)	4.8
5	Fabio Capello (England)	3.9
6	Marcelo Bielsa (Chile)	3.4
7	Carlos Dunga (Brazil)	2.9
8	Roy Hodgson (Fulham)	1.3
9	Alex Sabella (Estudiantes)	1.1
10	Jose Mourinho (Internazionale)	0.8
	Others	4.7

YOUNG PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1	Sergio Aguero (Atletico Madrid & Argentina)	45.1
2	Alexandre Pato (Milan & Brazil)	25.2
3	Stevan Jovetic (Fiorentina & Montengro)	9.8
4	Karim Benzema (Lyon/Real Madrid & France)	4.6
5	Bojan Krkic (Barcelona & Spain)	3.6
6	Mesut Ozil (Werder Bremen & Germany)	2.5
7	Theo Walcott (Arsenal & England)	2.3
8	Alan Dzagoev (CSKA Moscow & Russia)	1.2
9	Sergio Busquets (Barcelona & Spain)	1.1
10	Dominic Adiyiah (Fredrikstad & Ghana)	0.6
	Others	4.0

PREVIOUS WINNERS

WORLD PLAYER

		% of votes
1982	Paolo Rossi (Juventus & Italy)	23
1983	Zico (Udinese & Brazil)	28
1984	Michel Platini (Juventus & France)	54
1985	Michel Platini (Juventus & France)	21
1986	Diego Maradona (Napoli & Argentina)	36
1987	Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)	39
1988	Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)	43
1989	Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)	24
1990	Lothar Matthaus (Internazionale & West Germany)	22
1991	Jean-Pierre Papin (Marseille & France)	25
1992	Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)	19
1993	Roberto Baggio (Juventus & Italy)	14
1994	Paolo Maldini (Milan & Italy)	27
1995	Gianluca Vialli (Juventus & Italy)	18
1996	Ronaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	17
1997	Ronaldo (Barcelona/Internazionale & Brazil)	27
1998	Zinedine Zidane (Juventus & France)	23
1999	Rivaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	42
2000	Luis Figo (Barcelona/Real Madrid & Portugal)	26
2001	Michael Owen (Liverpool & England)	31
2002	Ronaldo (Internazionale/Real Madrid & Brazil)	26
2003	Pavel Nedved (Juventus & Czech Republic)	36
2004	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	29
2005	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	39
2006	Fabio Cannavaro (Juventus/Real Madrid & Italy)	40
2007	Kaka (Milan & Brazil)	52
2008	Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United & Portugal)	48

WORLD MANAGER

1982	Enzo Bearzot (Italy)	49
1983	Sepp Piontek (Denmark)	29
1984	Michel Hidalgo (France)	30
1985	Terry Venables (Barcelona)	30
1986	Guy Thys (Belgium)	15
1987	Johan Cruyff (Ajax)	25
1988	Rinus Michels (Holland/Bayer Leverkusen)	48
1989	Arrigo Sacchi (Milan)	42
1990	Franz Beckenbauer (West Germany)	53
1991	Michel Platini (France)	42
1992	Richard Moller Nielsen (Denmark)	28
1993	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	21
1994	Carlos Alberto Parreira (Brazil)	17
1995	Louis Van Gaal (Ajax)	42
1996	Berti Vogts (Germany)	28
1997	Ottmar Hitzfeld (Borussia Dortmund)	17
1998	Arsene Wenger (Arsenal)	28
1999	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	60
2000	Dino Zoff (Italy)	18
2001	Gerard Houllier (Liverpool)	28
2002	Guus Hiddink (South Korea)	28
2003	Carlo Ancelotti (Milan)	20
2004	Jose Mourinho (Porto/Chelsea)	36
2005	Jose Mourinho (Chelsea)	34
2006	Marcello Lippi (Italy)	35
2007	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	26
2008	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	37

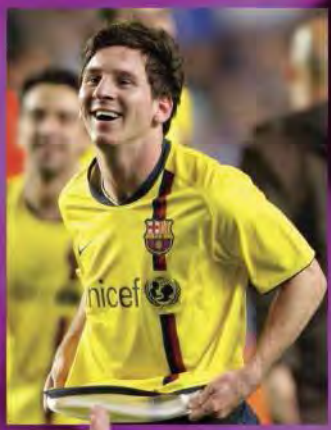
1982	Brazil	30	1996	Nigeria	31
1983	Hamburg	29	1997	Borussia Dortmund	20
1984	France	45	1998	France	35
1985	Everton	42	1999	Manchester United	61
1986	Argentina	15	2000	France	33
1987	Porto	38	2001	Liverpool	26
1988	Holland	43	2002	Brazil	24
1989	Milan	51	2003	Milan	23
1990	West Germany	28	2004	Greece	25
1991	France	20	2005	Liverpool	27
1992	Denmark	37	2006	Barcelona	42
1993	Parma	24	2007	Spain	22
1994	Milan	33	2008	Spain	41
1995	Ajax	50			

YOUNG PLAYER

2005	Robinho (Santos/Real Madrid & Brazil)	30
2006	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	36
2007	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	33
2008	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	44

LIONEL MESSI

2009 World Player of the Year



Clean-cut kid

It's no contest as Barcelona's Argentinian star sweeps the board

LEO MESSI is heading for a clean sweep – and with no argument. The judgment of *World Soccer*'s worldwide readers and contributors has never, ever been in question. A dispassionate cross-section of opinion of the world game has spoken.

The European Footballer of the Year trophy went the way of Barcelona's Argentina forward despite his comparatively modest contribution in the 2010 World Cup qualifying competition. FIFA's Player of the Year prize will also fall into his lap after Barcelona's all-conquering year of Champions League, European Supercup, Spanish league and cup plus Supercup – with no bets against him adding the Club World Cup.

Cristiano Ronaldo was indisputably the No1 choice a year ago, with Italy's Fabio Cannavaro pragmatically inevitable after his country's World Cup victory in 2006.

Messi's progress towards formal acknowledgement began in August 2008 when he and Argentina won the Olympic football gold medal in a scandalously mistimed Final in the midday heat of Beijing.

Simultaneously, while Messi was in China, so Pep Guardiola was a few weeks into a remarkable coaching career which has rocketed him from Barcelona nursery team to European domination. The partnership of this pair has proved magisterial. Guardiola provides the platform; Messi the match-turning genius.

> **"Messi is not merely the sharpest individual talent in the world game – he is also the most effective support act"**

Even when he is less than the focus of attention, Messi's reputation and threat is enough to distract defenders' attention. He is not merely the sharpest individual talent in the world game – he is also the most effective support act.

Real Madrid would agree, reluctantly, after his two goals last term in the Bernabeu; so would Athletic Bilbao after seeing Messi claim the goal which turned around the Spanish Cup Final; so would Manchester United after gifting Messi the decisive second goal which secured Barcelona their Champions League Final success in Rome.

The concept of true stardom has changed. No longer is what a player achieves on the ball enough. Understanding has changed. Fans and media are far more savvy nowadays. A player is appreciated now for how he creates space for his team-mates.

Maybe Messi was not seen at his most extravagant in Barcelona's latest, single-goal win over a reviving Real Madrid, but he played his role in the team to perfection. And, on

the rare occasion when opportunity presented, he accelerated, twisted and pirouetted around two, three or four opponents. Discussion will continue about whether Guardiola sometimes uses Messi too deep when his twinkling feet wreak the ultimate damage on approaching the fringe of the penalty box, but Barcelona are not doing so badly as they are.

Pele has said: "It's Messi's turn," in reviewing the various candidates for the top awards over the past few years, "after Ronaldinho, Kaka and Cristiano Ronaldo."

Barcelona claim to have lined up more top-award winners than any other club and Messi can go on extending that line. He has committed himself to a contract extension which would keep him at Camp Nou until 2016 and president Joan Laporta knows the price. He made Zlatan Ibrahimovic – as the Swede's agent had demanded – the best-paid player at the club on arriving from Internazionale... and then, almost the next day, called Messi's men to rewrite the contract which lifted Messi back to top spot.

Master and apprentice... Maradona (right) and Messi

Everyone knows the story: how he arrived at La Masia aged 13 from Newell's Old Boys' youth section and was coached and built up. He has now won 28 prizes of one sort or another in only six years – both team and individual – since being promoted to Barcelona's senior squad in 2005-06.

That season he was also top scorer and top player at the World Youth Cup in Holland and carried off an Argentinian footballer of the year prize for good measure. FIFpro, the Champions League and Copa America have all fallen under the player-prize magic of little Leo.

Argentinian football has given the worldwide game a never-ending string of outstanding, even great, players: Orsi, Monti, Nestor Rossi, Pedernera, Moreno, Di Stefano, Sivori, Artime, Kempes, Maradona...and now Messi.

He is world player of the year not so much by vote as by acclamation.

Maradona has hailed Messi as "my successor" and Maradona does not concede comparisons readily. But then, *El Pibe* needs to encourage Messi. Argentina's progress to the World Cup finals was anything but impressive and Maradona did not appear to know how to bring the best out of his finest player. But if the world champion of 1986 wants to emulate, as a manager, his own playing achievement, then he needs Messi at his best in South Africa.

The King's Cup...Messi's brilliance beat Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Cup Final

Main man...Argentina will need Messi to be at his best in South Africa

Maradona or not, Messi's own ambition may make up for whatever is missing. Then he will be waltzing off with this award all over again this time next year.

Keir Radnedge

Ahead of the rest...Messi scores Barca's second goal in the 2009 Champions League Final against Manchester United

BARCELONA

2009 World Team of the Year

They won it all...Barcelona were unquestionably the team of 2009

IT WOULD have been a major surprise if Barcelona had not won the accolade as 2009's team of the year. The Spanish and European champions bulldozed their way through the voting in much the same way they swept through opponents over the past year.

In the course of 12 months, Pep Guardiola's side have won the Spanish league and cup, Champions League and European Super Cup, and are favourites to add the Club World Cup to that impressive roll of honours.

There has been no let-up this season either, with crucial victories in key games against Internazionale and Real Madrid, in the Champions League and La Liga respectively.

> **Barcelona bulldozed through the voting in the same way they swept through opponents**

Barcelona's success has been all the more impressive because it has been achieved with a hefty dose of home-grown talent. The likes of Leo Messi, Xavi, Andres Iniesta, Victor Valdes and Carles Puyol have been the leading lights of the side and all began their footballing education at the club's La Masia academy.

Where do Barca go from here? Well, some potential obstacles lurk on the horizon. The run-in to last season was almost ruined by injuries and weariness. This season, burn-out is an even bigger threat, with several key players having been with Spain at last summer's Confederations Cup and others set to represent Catalonia in exhibition games during the Christmas break. The Club World Cup could also cause problems.

Next year's presidential elections are also looming and potential successors engaged in electioneering could prove an unwelcome distraction off the pitch.

For the moment though, Barcelona's remarkable achievements in 2009 deserve global recognition.

PEP GUARDIOLA

2009 World Manager of the Year

THE RAPID RISE of Josep "Pep" Guardiola has been one of the most dramatic in the history of the modern game.

Eighteen months ago, Guardiola had just finished his first season as coach of Barcelona's B team. A leading light in Barcelona's "Dream Team" of the 1990s, he had led Barca B to promotion to the Spanish Segunda Division B, while Frank Rijkaard's time in charge of the first team had been drifting to a disappointing conclusion.

Guardiola's appointment as first-team coach at the age of 37 may have taken some by surprise, but his credentials – as a former Barca captain and Catalan nationalist – were beyond question.

He wasted little time in dispensing with several of Rijkaard's key players – Ronaldinho, Deco, Edmilson – and proceeded to reinvigorate the club. With Lionel Messi as the new figurehead and the previously disillusioned Samuel Eto'o reborn, Guardiola's side streaked into an unassailable lead in La Liga.

In Rome last May, Guardiola became the second-youngest manager to win the European Cup and he also joined only a handful of people to have won the trophy as both player and coach.

There will surely be further milestones to celebrate in the years to come.

On the up...Guardiola

SERGIO AGUERO

2009 Young Player of the Year

Hot property...Atletico look set to cash-in on Aguero

WHETHER HE LIKES it or not, Sergio Aguero cannot escape the comparisons with Diego Maradona. Aguero's relationship with Maradona's daughter Giannina – she gave birth to their son, Benjamin, in February 2009 – means the Atletico Madrid forward is as close to Argentinian football royalty as it is possible to get.

Whether the comparisons with Diego are fair is another matter, but Aguero's performances for Atletico suggest a career at the very highest level is well within his grasp – irrespective of any assistance his father-in-law may be able to provide.

Big things have been expected of Aguero since an early age after he became the youngest player in the Argentinian first division, making his debut for Independiente aged 15 years and 35 days in July 2003.

It was Aguero, rather than team-mate Lionel Messi, who was the star of Argentina's 2007 Under-20 World Cup triumph in Canada, finishing as the tournament's top scorer on six goals and winning the Golden Ball as the competition's best player.

With Atletico since 2006, Aguero has played his part in an exciting attacking partnership with Diego Forlan. However, he is unlikely to stay much longer at the serially unstable Atletico where, in October, Abel Resino became the latest coach to fall on his sword.

Chelsea were said to be the club who, in December, bid £40million to break Aguero's release clause.

"We have had another opportunity [to sell him] and again we have said no," claimed Atletico majority shareholder Miguel Angel Gil Marin. "Aguero will leave Atletico when he wants to go, as happened with Fernando Torres."

That is likely to be sooner rather than later, with a summer departure to England the most probable outcome for world football's brightest young talent.

RONALDINHO

World Player of the Decade

RONALDO DE ASSIS MOREIRA, better known as Ronaldinho, is *World Soccer's* Player of the Decade. Based on the votes cast by readers in the 10 annual votes between 2000 and 2009, the Brazilian – who was our World Player of the Year in 2004 and 2005 – is the outstanding performer of the past 10 years.

Ronaldinho finished ahead of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, as well as other winners of the individual award, including Michael Owen, Pavel Nedved and Fabio Cannavaro.

The "Dinho" question

Can Milan afford to wait for former star to deliver?

IS RONALDINHO finally about to deliver? When the Brazilian ace was formally "presented" to the Milan faithful last year, he was greeted at the San Siro like some sort of all-conquering hero, wooed by pulsating samba rhythms, a firework display and a 30,000-strong crowd.

Eighteen months later, those same Milan fans might be entitled to ask themselves if he was worth all the fuss. Even no less a figure than Pier Silvio Berlusconi – son of the prime minister and the club's owner, Silvio Berlusconi – recently criticised the club's estimated £16million purchase of Ronaldinho from Barcelona.

"If it had been up to me, I would have gone down another, more long-term road rather than buying a player for the immediate short term," Berlusconi junior told reporters during a TV business fair in Monte Carlo in November, in reference to *"Il Dentone"* (the big toothy one).

When Brazil coach Dunga left Ronaldinho out of the squad for the World Cup qualifiers last autumn, there were those willing to speculate this was the end of the international road for him.

Unconfirmed sources told us that a dejected "Dinho" was even thinking of chucking it all in. He had had enough. Dunga, meanwhile, merely urged people to leave the player alone and allow him to regain his best form.

Which, curiously, is what he appears to have done at the end of 2009, when there were tantalising indications that perhaps, just perhaps, the former World Player of the Year might still be capable of getting back up there. As Milan have switched to a more attacking line-up (Alexandre Pato-Clarence Seedorf-Ronaldinho playing behind Marco Borriello), Ronaldinho has come up with a variety of glorious assists for either compatriot Pato or Borriello.

Even on a disappointing night which saw Milan held 1-1 in the Champions League by Marseille, Ronaldinho was arguably the best news of the game for Milan. As the former European champions struggled to contain a determined Marseille in the second half, Ronaldinho was noticeable not only for the quality of his play but also, unusually for him, for the enthusiasm with which he covered and chased back. At one point he was seen excitedly urging the San Siro faithful to get behind the team.

If owner Berlusconi had written the script, that is how it would have gone.

> **Milan badly need 'Dinho' to do the business out there on the pitch rather than on the transfer market**

Energetic...the new, industrious Ronaldinho (left) takes on Marseille's Benoit Cheyrou in the Champions League

As far as the powers that be at Milan are concerned, this just has to be Ronaldinho's season. Last summer, of course, he may well have served as a pawn in the chess-war of never-ending rivalry that underlines all relations between Milan and city cousins Internazionale. He tended to look like Milan's answer to the bold move which a month earlier had seen Inter hire the "Special One", former Porto and Chelsea coach Jose Mourinho.

Now in this post-Kaka, post-Paolo Maldini, post-Carlo Ancelotti campaign, Milan badly need "Dinho" to do the business out there on the pitch rather than on the transfer market. Media tycoon Berlusconi has always been a huge fan, believing that Ronaldinho can write new chapters in Milan's history by reproducing the sort of form which saw him win the *World Soccer* World Player of the Year, FIFA Player of Year and European Player of the Year awards, not to mention the Champions League title, during his five seasons (2003 to 2008) with Barca.

By the end of last season, beset by

a series of niggling injuries and regularly consigned to the bench by Ancelotti, there was little sign of such a revival for Ronaldinho. The season had begun well with him picking the best possible match to score his first Serie A goal for Milan: namely, a winning header against Inter in the first derby of last season. But that perfect start proved to be a mirage and, to a large extent, it was all downhill from then on.

It may well be that the change of coach at Milan has proved beneficial for Ronaldinho. When he says that it is easy to work with the new man in charge – compatriot Leonardo – one tends to believe him, if for nothing else because the two men speak the same language: both literally and also in terms of their football philosophies. There seems little doubt, too, that Leonardo has put his own neck on the line by investing in a Ronaldinho revival – something that may just be beginning to pay a dividend.

"I find it really difficult to be stuck on the bench," says Ronaldinho. "I'm glad only when I get a chance to do the thing I like best – to play. I was unhappy but now I'm enjoying my football again."

Some Milanello observers also point to his more professional lifestyle. In other words, these days Ronaldinho spends much more time on the training pitch than on the dance floor.

Kindred spirits...Ronaldinho and Milan coach Leonardo

Those observations may be a trifle unkind but it was significant to hear an old Milan warrior like Franco Baresi recently highlight Ronaldinho as the key figure in an overall Milan seasonal watershed. "Milan's seasonal start was not easy but the team looks to me to have refound morale, enthusiasm and self-belief, starting with Ronaldinho," Baresi observed.

Milan fans will be hoping he is right. They will be hoping that at 29 he can climb back to where he once was, right at the very top of the greasy pole of world acclaim.

Paddy Agnew

Looking forward...Ronaldinho is rediscovering his appetite for the game with Milan

HOW YOU VOTED

WORLD PLAYER OF THE DECADE		points
1	Ronaldinho	781
2	Lionel Messi	759
3	Cristiano Ronaldo	708
4	Thierry Henry	619
5	Kaka	567
6	Fabio Cannavaro	401
7	Pavel Nedved	394
8	Michael Owen	330
9	Luis Figo	290
10	Zinedine Zidane	270
11	Raul	261
12	Ronaldo	260
13	Andriy Shevchenko	230
14	Andres Iniesta	215
15	Michael Ballack	180
16	Xavi	163
17	Rivaldo	150
18	Fernando Torres	149
19=	Samuel Eto'o	146
19=	Frank Lampard	146
21	Steven Gerrard	134
22	Deco	130
23	Francesco Totti	107
24	Ruud Van Nistrelrooy	99
25	Oliver Kahn	90
26	Paolo Maldini	82
27	Didier Drogba	79
28	Juan Roman Riquelme	77
29	Adriano	73
30	Iker Casillas	59
31	Andrei Arshavin	54
32	Zlatan Ibrahimovic	53
33	Gianluigi Buffon	49
34	David Villa	46
35	Roy Makaay	40
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PLAY-OFFS

Tears, tantrums and triumphs dominate dramatic end to qualifying campaign

NEW ZEALAND qualified for the World Cup finals for the first time since 1982 after beating Bahrain in a two-legged play-off. After a goalless draw in Manama, a 1-0 win in the second leg in Auckland was enough to send the All Whites through.

Rory Fallon was the Kiwis' goalscoring hero (see Headliners, page 20), but goalkeeper Mark Paston also played a crucial role, saving Sayed Mohamed's 50th-minute penalty after earlier denying Bahrain striker Jaycee John on two occasions.

New Zealand qualified for the finals having only played three other teams – Fiji, Vanuatu and New Caledonia – in their Oceania qualifying section before the play-off with Bahrain.

The 35,194 attendance at Wellington's Westpac Stadium was the largest-ever for a football match in the country.

"This group of players has given everything to achieve this dream, everything over the last four years," said coach Ricki Herbert. "It's incredible. We're back, we're there."

In Europe, Irish fury at Thierry Henry's handball in Paris overshadowed the qualifying successes of Slovenia, Portugal and Greece.

"We are angry," said Republic of Ireland coach Giovanni Trapattoni about France's winning goal, scored by William Gallas in extra time after Henry had twice handled. "It is a bitter evening for me. We played a great game. We deserved to win."

Heading for the finals...Bruno Alves scores Portugal's winner against Bosnia in the first leg in Lisbon

Determined fashion

After Nicolas Anelka's deflected shot had given France a 1-0 lead from the first leg in Dublin, Ireland had begun in much more determined fashion in Paris. Robbie Keane equalised, but then missed several chances to kill off the tie and France took the game to extra time.

Les Bleus became the penultimate team to qualify for the finals; by then Slovenia had already sprung the biggest surprise of the play-offs by beating Russia on away goals.

The Russians had been confident of qualifying, even sporting a new home kit which they also planned to wear this summer. Goals either side of half-time in Moscow from Diniyar Bilyaletdinov put Russia in a commanding position, but Slovenia grabbed a vital away goal through substitute Nejc Pecnik's header two minutes from time to set up an intriguing second leg.

Russian frustrations at handing the advantage to Slovenia were apparent from the start of the return in Ljubljana, where Slovenia exploited some nervy defending and Zlatko Dedic scored in the 44th minute.

Russia coach Guus Hiddink responded by bringing on Sergei Semak and Aleksandr Kerzhakov but his side's fortunes took a turn for the worse in the 66th minute when Kerzhakov, challenging for a loose ball, slid in on goalkeeper Samir Handanovic and was harshly sent off.

Russia poured forward in search of the goal that would win the tie, but Handanovic saved from Pavel Pogrebnyak and Yuri Zhirkov – before Zhirkov was shown a second yellow card following a touchline altercation with a Slovenia substitute.

While Andrei Arshavin will be one of the biggest absentees from this summer's finals, another star name, Cristiano Ronaldo, will be going to the finals after Portugal overcame a spirited Bosnia in their play-off.

Ronaldo, nursing an ankle injury,

Mark's moment...New Zealand keeper Paston saves a penalty by Bahrain's Sayed Mohamed

New Zealand only played Fiji, Vanuatu and New Caledonia in the Oceania group before their play-off with Bahrain

Read more at worldsoccer.com/competitions/worldcup

missed both legs but goals from Bruno Alves in the first leg in Lisbon and Raul Meireles in the return in Zenica gave Portugal a comfortable victory.

Greece, the 2004 European champions, qualified for their first finals since 1994 despite drawing 0-0 at home to Ukraine in the first leg of their play-off.

In the return in rainswept Donetsk, the Donbass Arena was half-empty after fans refused to pay high ticket prices. Panathinaikos striker Dimitris Salpigidis scored the only goal of the tie to give Greece a surprise victory.

Sealed qualification

In the South America-Central America play-off, Uruguay took the final World Cup berth. They were always on course to beat Costa Rica after taking an early lead in the first leg in San Jose through Diego Lugano.

Much-travelled striker Sebastian Abreu sealed Uruguay's qualification in the second leg, with a second-half header just five minutes after coming off the substitutes' bench.

Costa Rica replied soon after through Walter Centeno, but coach Rene Simoes complained afterwards that his team were not streetwise enough, saying: "We were really lacking that nastiness, the kind that South American players have. And I can say that, because I'm Brazilian. The problem was the first leg, we gave Uruguay far too much respect."

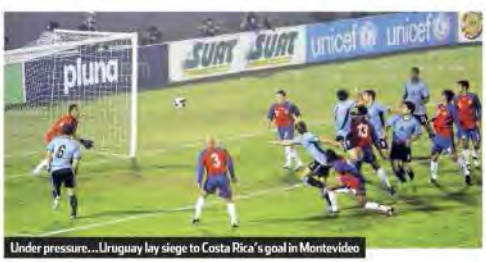
In Africa, the play-off between Algeria and Egypt (see Dispatches, page 34) generated headlines around the globe, meaning reduced coverage for continental heavyweights Cameroon and Nigeria, who both secured qualification.

Cameroon cruised to a sixth World Cup finals after a 2-0 victory in Tunisia, with goals from Mallorca striker Pierre Webo and captain Samuel Eto'o.

Nigeria's qualification looked shaky going into the final round of matches, but Tunisia's 1-0 loss to Mozambique – who qualified for the African Nations Cup as a result – meant Nigeria's 3-2 win away to Kenya was enough to secure the Super Eagles' passage to South Africa. Obafemi Martins (see Headliners, page 22) was the hero of the hour.

John Holmesdale

Down and out...Arshavin



Under pressure...Uruguay lay siege to Costa Rica's goal in Montevideo

QUALIFIER NO 23

NEW ZEALAND

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Topped the Oceania qualification zone and then beat the Asian play-off winners, Bahrain, 1-0 on aggregate.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
1982: group stage.

NICKNAME
All Whites.

THE COACH
Ricki Herbert, played twice at Spain 82 and in every one of what was then a record 15-game qualifying campaign as New Zealand reached their only previous World Cup finals. Took charge of the national team in 2003 and, since 2007, has managed to combine the role with being head coach of Australian A-League club side Wellington Phoenix.

KEY PLAYERS
Captain and defender Ryan Nelsen, forward Shane Smeltz.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
83

RECORD IN QUALIFICATION
P8 W6 D0 L2 F15 A5

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
28

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Shane Smeltz (8), Dave Mulligan (3).

DISCIPLINE
6 yellow, 1 red.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (3-4-3)
Paston - Vicelich, Nelsen, Sigmund - Lochhead, Bertos, Brown, Elliott - Fallon, Smeltz, Killen.

No way through...Nelsen (in white) keeps Bahrain's Jaycee John at bay

QUALIFIER NO 24

NIGERIA

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Came from behind during the final round of games to top Group B with a win in Kenya as leaders Tunisia fell to a shock 1-0 defeat away to Mozambique.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
1994: second round. 1998: second round. 2002: group stage.

NICKNAME
Super Eagles.

THE COACH
Shaibu Amodu, replaced German coach Berti Vogts in April 2008 for his third spell as Nigeria's national team boss. Led his country to qualification for the 2002 World Cup but was sacked four months before the finals. History could repeat itself with the Nigerian FA reportedly keen on hiring a big-name foreign coach.

KEY PLAYERS
Midfielder Jon Obi Mikel, striker Obafemi Martins.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
32

RECORD IN QUALIFYING
P12 W9 D3 L0 F20 A5

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
32

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Victor Obinna (4), Ike Uche (4).

DISCIPLINE
14 yellows, 0 reds.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (4-4-2)
Enyeama - Odiah, Yobo, Adeleye, Taiwo - Olofinjana, Mikel, Kalu Uche, Odemwingie - Martins, Aiyegbeni.

On target...Ike Uche

QUALIFIER NO 25

CAMEROON

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Topped African qualifying Group A ahead of Gabon, Togo and Morocco.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
1982: group stage. 1990: quarter-finals. 1994: group stage. 1998: group stage. 2002: group stage.

Main man...Eto'o

NICKNAME
Indomitable Lions.

THE COACH
Paul Le Guen, Frenchman who guided Lyon to three successive Ligue 1 championship victories in 2003, 2004 and 2005. After an unhappy spell in Scotland with Rangers, he returned home to lead Paris Saint-Germain to the 2008 League Cup before taking charge of Cameroon in July that year.

KEY PLAYERS
Striker Samuel Eto'o, veteran defender Rigobert Song, defensive midfielder Jean Makoun.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
14

RECORD IN QUALIFYING
P12 W9 D2 L1 F23 A4

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
33

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Samuel Eto'o (9), Achille Emana (3), Jean Makoun (3).

DISCIPLINE
13 yellows, 1 red.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (4-4-2)
Kameni – Geremi, R Song, Nkoulou, Assou-Ekotto - Emana, Mbia, A Song, Makoun – Eto'o, Webo

QUALIFIER NO 26

ALGERIA

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
In extraordinary circumstances, beating Egypt 1-0 in a play-off in neutral Khartoum – the capital of Sudan – after the two sides had finished on identical points, goal difference and goals scored.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
1982: group stage. 1986: group stage.

NICKNAME
The Desert Foxes.

THE COACH
Rabah Saadane, who was also coach for their last appearance in the finals, in 1986.

KEY PLAYERS
Striker Rafik Saifi, midfield creator Karim Ziani, former French youth international Hassan Yebda.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
29

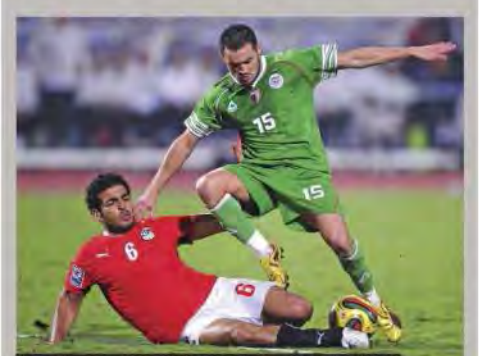
RECORD IN QUALIFYING
P13 W8 D2 L3 F17 A8

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
25

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Rafik Saifi (3), Antar Yahia (3), Karim Ziani (3).

DISCIPLINE
21 yellows, 0 reds.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (4-4-2)
Gaouaoui - Bougherra, Yahia, Halliche, Belhadj - Yebda, Mansouri, Meghni, Ziani - Saifi, Ghezzal.



Crunch game...Ziani (in green) battles it out with Egypt's Hani Said in Cairo

QUALIFIER NO 27

GREECE

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Via the play-offs after beating Ukraine 1-0 on aggregate over two legs. Finished second to Switzerland in their European qualifying group.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
1994: group stage.

THE COACH
Otto Rehhagel, German who became the first foreign coach to win the European Championship when he led Greece to success in 2004. In charge of the national side since 2001, he is often accused of being too defensive.

KEY PLAYERS
Midfield playmaker Giorgos Karagounis, forwards Theofanis Gekas and Georgios Samaras.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
16

RECORD IN QUALIFYING
P12 W7 D3 L2 F21 A10

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
26

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Theofanis Gekas (10), Angelos Charisteas (4).

DISCIPLINE
23 yellows, 1 red.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (4-3-3)
Chalkias - Seitaridis, Kyrgiakos, Papadopoulos, Torosidis - Basinas, Katsouranis, Karagounis - Charisteas, Gekas, Samaras.

Top scorer...Gekas netted more goals in qualification than any other European player

QUALIFIER NO 28

SLOVENIA

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Beat Russia on away goals in a play-off, following a second-place finish in their European qualifying group – behind Slovakia but ahead of Czech Republic and Poland. Having appeared out of the running at one point, they won their last four group matches.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
2002: group stage.

THE COACH
Matjaz Kek, former national Under-15 and Under-16 coach who steered local side Maribor into the Champions League.

KEY PLAYERS
Captain and midfield motor Robert Koren, strikers Milivoje Novakovic and Zlatko Dedic.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
49

RECORD IN QUALIFYING
P12 W7 D2 L3 F20 A6

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
27

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Milivoje Novakovic (5), Zlatko Dedic (3).

DISCIPLINE
24 yellows, 0 reds.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (4-4-2)
Handanovic - Brecko, Suler, Cesar, Jokic - Koren, Birsa, Radosavljevic, Kirm - Novakovic, Dedic.

Going through...Novakovic (no11) threatens in the play-off second leg against Russia

QUALIFIER NO 29

PORTUGAL

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Beat Bosnia-Herzegovina in a play-off after a disappointing qualifying campaign which started badly with a home defeat by Denmark, and continued with draws against Sweden and Albania.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
1966: semi-finals. 1986: group stage. 2002: group stage. 2006: semi-finals.

NICKNAME
Selecao.

THE COACH
Carlos Queiroz, in his second spell in charge of the senior side having also coached the Under-20s to world title success in 1991.

KEY PLAYERS
Cristiano Ronaldo, winger Simao, recently naturalised Brazil-born striker Liedson.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
10

RECORD IN QUALIFYING
P12 W7 D4 L1 F19 A5

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
31

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Simao (4), Nani (3).

DISCIPLINE
13 yellows. 0 reds.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (4-3-3)
Eduardo - Bosingwa, Bruno Alves, Carvalho, Duda - Deco, Pepe, Raul Meireles - Ronaldo, Liedson, Simao.

It was close...Simao and Liedson eventually booked their spot in South Africa

QUALIFIER NO 30

FRANCE

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Controversially, after beating Republic of Ireland 2-1 on aggregate in a play-off. Finished behind group winners Serbia, having never recovered from an opening defeat by Austria.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
1930: first round. 1934: first round. 1938: quarter-finals. 1954: group stage. 1958: semi-finals. 1966: group stage. 1978: group stage. 1982: fourth. 1986: third. 1998: winners. 2002: group stage. 2006: runners-up.

NICKNAME
Les Bleus.

THE COACH
Raymond Domenech, former Under-21 coach who has managed to cling on to his job as national boss in the face of huge public opposition. Has attracted particular criticism for his decision to leave Franck Ribery and Karim Benzema on the bench.

KEY PLAYERS
Thierry Henry, Franck Ribery, Nicolas Anelka.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
9

RECORD IN QUALIFYING
P12 W7 D4 L1 F20 A10

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
28

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Andre-Pierre Gignac (4), Thierry Henry (4), Nicolas Anelka (3), Franck Ribery (3).

DISCIPLINE
[illegible] yellows, 1 red.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (4-2-3-1)
Lloris - Sagna, Gallas, Abidal, Evra - L Diarra, Toulalan – Anelka, Gourcuff, Henry - Gignac.

Watch closely...Republic of Ireland defender Richard Dunne (left) keeps on eye on Gignac

QUALIFIER NO 31

URUGUAY

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
The last team to qualify after beating Costa Rica in the CONMEBOL/CONCACAF play-off. Lost out to Argentina for the final automatic place from the South American section after being beaten at home by Argentina in their final group game.

PREVIOUS FINALS APPEARANCES
1930: winners. 1950: winners. 1954: semi-finals. 1962: group stage. 1966: quarter-finals. 1970: semi-finals. 1974: group stage. 1986: second round. 1990: second round. 2002: group stage.

NICKNAME
La Celeste (sky blues).

THE COACH
Oscar Tabarez, coach of Uruguay at the 1990 World Cup. Enjoyed success with clubs in South America, winning the Libertadores Cup with Penarol and Boca Juniors, but not Europe (a short spell with Milan in 1996).

KEY PLAYERS
Diego Forlan, Luis Suarez.

FIFA WORLD RANKING
25

RECORD IN QUALIFYING
P18 W6 D6 L6 F28 A20

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFICATION
34

LEADING GOALSCORERS IN QUALIFICATION
Diego Forlan (7), Sebastian Abreu (5), Luis Suarez (5).

DISCIPLINE
[illegible] yellows, 5 reds.

TYPICAL LINE-UP (3-4-1-2)
Castillo - Scotti, Lugano, Godin - M Pereira, Perez, Eguren, A Pereira - Lodeiro - Suarez, Forlan.

Golden boy...Uruguay will look to Forlan for goals this summer

ALGERIA
Rafik Saifi

"Algerian Cantona" rising to leadership challenge

MORE THAN a few coaches will be finding it hard to believe this Rafik Saifi's transformation from bad boy to trusted international skipper and role model for younger team-mates.

During a decade in France – with Troyes, Istres, Ajaccio and Lorient – no one ever questioned the 34-year-old's technical ability, delicate touch or wide range of flicks and backheels. Yet, in the eyes of most, his undoubted skills came at too high a price.

"He was a player who would have you tearing your hair out," says his former boss at Istres, Mecha Bazdarevic. "One trick would never be enough for him.

"He would have to do it twice or three times. If he was through on goal, a simple side-footed finish was not his style. He'd have to go for something spectacular.

"Of course, the fans loved it. But, when you are fighting against relegation, he's a luxury you cannot afford.

"He's an artist. Not one for effectiveness. In times past, when everybody played to win, he'd be the first on the team sheet. But not now.

"That said, he'd be a sensation at a club like Marseille, where the supporters love extravagant ability. He would have had the Stade Velodrome in his pocket."

But it seems you can teach an old dog new tricks. While still able to turn a game with a devastating dribble or magical party piece, Saifi unexpectedly reinvented himself during the 2010 qualifiers, toning down the overt individualism and at long last learning how to mix up the flashes of genius with basic, but nonetheless essential, link-up work – the sort of tasks he once would have thought below him.

Rather than showboating, he is now more focused on winning games for Algeria, and he certainly did his fair share of spadework en route to South Africa, forever impressing with his quick feet, vision and goals.

"No one questioned his technical ability, yet in the eyes of most his undoubted skills came at a price"

The one-time lone ranger has also developed into a fine skipper; a guiding light on and off the pitch. Following his team's 2-0 loss in Egypt, a result which meant the two countries would have to play-off in Khartoum, the Algerians were in a state of shock – traumatised not only by the defeat, but also by the stoning of their bus on arrival in Cairo. But comfortable in his role as leader, Saifi stepped forward to rally the troops.

And he did a good job too, with Algeria winning the Sudan showdown 1-0 to book only their third World Cup finals appearance, after 1982 and 1986.

"I said my piece to the boys, so did our coach [Rabah Saadane]," says Saifi. "But after the violence in Cairo no one in our camp really needed motivating for the play-off.

"We felt we were victims of an injustice, and to make it worse this happened in another Arab country. We had players hurt on that bus, including myself. The Egyptians said we made it all up. But we had proof. We filmed it on our mobiles. FIFA should have done a lot more about it.

"[Diego] Maradona says a few words and he's suspended for two months. We, on the other hand, had no redress."

Straight talking is second nature to Saifi. When Troyes coach Alain Perrin asked him to go easy with the Ramadan fasting, he angrily threatened to quit, and last year he accused referee Tony Chapron of telling him to "shut your mouth".

Some assumed Saifi's decision to leave Ligue 1 Lorient last summer for the Al Khor club in Qatar would signal the end of his international career. Not a bit of it. The "Algerian Cantona" is ready for one last hurrah.

Nick Bidwell

The real thing...the Algerian captain has lead by example on the way to South Africa

FRANCE
Nicolas Anelka

Enigmatic striker maturing into international contender

DESPITE PLAYING a prominent role in France's World Cup qualification – he scored the winner in the first leg of the play-offs in Dublin – Anelka knows better than anyone that he cannot take a seat on the plane to South Africa for granted.

Tipped to feature in the France squads of 1998, 2002 and 2006, but never making the final cut, he has grown used to associating the World Cup with disappointment.

In 1998, two months after winning his first full cap, France coach Aime Jacquet labelled him too inexperienced. Four years later Roger Lemerre was similarly unconvinced, and when Djibril Cisse broke a leg on the eve of the 2006 tournament, Raymond Domenech preferred Lyon's Sidney Govou.

"Obviously it's a pity to miss out on big competitions, but it hasn't affected me at all," says Anelka in typically unrepentant mode. "I'm neither obsessed or scarred by it. I haven't needed World Cup appearances to exist in this business.

"Maybe it's written in the stars that I'll never play in one, though I hope not. I am as keen as anybody to play for *Les Bleus* in South Africa and enjoy a good tournament. Qualification is only the start of the process.

"We have to aim high and go a long way in the finals. There's no point returning home after three games."

For Anelka to be on the verge of ending his World Cup exile borders on the miraculous. Not so long ago he seemed hell-bent on committing international suicide, turning down a call-up in 2002 from Jacques Santini and then aiming an enigmatic volley at the next man in charge, Domenech, saying: "Every time they choose strange people as head coach."

Yet Domenech, a man capable of bearing a grudge for an eternity, gave another chance to the striker who often gives the impression of not caring.

Now 30 and in his prime, Anelka is better equipped than ever to make headway on the international stage. More mature, relaxed and comfortable in himself, he is not nearly so sensitive as he once was.

Another factor in his favour is the obvious pleasure he is deriving from his club football these days. The open, fast-paced English game is made to measure for his qualities and it is no coincidence that while his form in the Premier League – with Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester City, Bolton Wanderers and now Chelsea – has left little to be desired, it never really worked out for him at Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain and Fenerbahce.

The one headache the French have with Anelka is where to best use him. Domenech generally plays him in a deep-lying role on the right side of attack but, with Anelka often wandering into the middle and doing little tracking back, it can seem pointless.

The obvious move would be to deploy him up front in a two-man strike-force. But, as we know only too well, Domenech does not do the obvious.

Nick Bidwell

"Anelka's return borders on the miraculous...he'd seemed intent on committing international suicide"

Back in favour...Anelka looks set to finally make it to the World Cup finals

SIX OF THE BEST BIG-CLUB

Mame DIOUF
MOLDE

JULY 2009 was certainly a month to remember for Senegal striker Mame Diouf. After a four-goal blitz for Molde in their 5-2 thrashing of Brann Bergen, he agreed terms to join Premier League champions Manchester United.

With a ticket to footballing fame and fortune in his back pocket, the 21-year-old – who was promptly loaned back to the Norwegian club for the remainder of the year – might have been tempted to go through the motions in his final few weeks by the fjords. But easing up is not part of his make-up and, as wholehearted and incisive as ever, he continued to pile on the goals (16 by the end of the campaign), laying the foundations for his side's highly satisfactory runners-up spot behind Rosenborg.

Born in Dakar, he learnt his trade at top Senegalese club ASC Diaraf before leaving for Molde in 2007. He earned his first Senegal cap in a friendly against the DR Congo in August last year and is now in pole position to be the long-term successor to El Hadji Diouf for the Lions of Terenga. However, despite the name, he is no relation to the Blackburn Rovers man – nor is he endowed with the latter's taste for controversy.

Kermit ERASMUS
EXCELSIOR

ON LOAN FROM Feyenoord to fellow Rotterdammers and on-off satellite club Excelsior, 19-year-old South African striker Kermit Erasmus may be plying his trade in the Dutch second tier but that has not stopped him pushing his claims to feature in his nation's World Cup plans this summer.

While injury problems made it hard for him to have an impact at Feyenoord last season – his first in Holland following a move from Pretoria club Supersport United – he has performed much better since switching to Excelsior, doing enough to convince new Bafana Bafana coach Carlos Alberto Parreira to draft him into the squad for the November friendlies with Japan and Jamaica.

The stocky teen from Port Elizabeth, whose playing style is often compared to that of the former Brazil great Romario, was in fine fettle at this year's Under-20 World Cup in Egypt – scoring three goals in four matches – and could well turn out to be the heir apparent to long-time South Africa goalscoring mainstay Benni McCarthy.

Pacy, sharp and physically robust, his only flaw seems to be a lack of application.

KEIRRISON
BENFICA

PARKED AT the Lisbon Eagles by Barcelona, Brazilian boy wonder Keirrison has not enjoyed much playing time at the Estadio da Luz, where he has been forced to play second fiddle to the in-form pairing up front of Oscar Cardozo and Javier Saviola. But the 21-year-old should not be written off just yet.

Barca, who prised him away from Palmeiras last summer, do not tend to splash out £14million on a wing and a prayer – and if the Catalans had not done the deal, the likes of Juventus, Valencia and Liverpool might have.

As underlined by the 21 goals he netted for Coritiba in 2008 to become the Brazilian league's top scorer, he is a born finisher, lightning-quick in his reactions in the box and willing to shoot from any position. Any club which takes him on has to accept him for what he is: an identikit penalty-area predator who does not contribute much outside the danger zone. However, give him the right service and he will prosper.

Known as K9, he began at CENE in Campo Grande – the team owned by Korean religious cult leader Sun Myong-moon.

LOANEES

Nick Bidwell profiles the leading players who are out on loan from some of Europe's biggest clubs

Henri LANSBURY
WATFORD

ARSENAL ARE, of course, no strangers to lending talented prospects to clubs lower down the food chain. In recent times many young Gunners have benefitted from a diet of first-team football elsewhere – Nicklas Bendtner at Birmingham City, Carlos Vela in Spain with Salamanca and Osasuna, Alex Song at Charlton Athletic, Kieran Gibbs with Norwich City – and attacking midfielder Henri Lansbury is the latest to be thriving on his field trips.

The 19-year-old spent last season in the English third tier with Scunthorpe United and has now stepped up a level with Watford.

At Arsenal since the age of nine, he looks to have all the ingredients for a successful top-flight career: total comfort on the ball, excellent distribution, an ease with which he glides into advanced positions and his versatility. Central midfield is his natural home, but he also has turned his hand to the right side of midfield and the role of full-back. Has only appeared in League Cup games for Arsenal so far, but that should change soon.

Victor OBINNA
MALAGA

PLAYERS CAN BE their own worst enemy with their eternal optimism and on joining Internazionale from Chievo at the start of last season, Nigeria striker Victor Obinna must have known he would need an asbestos suit to withstand the hot competition for starting berths in the Serie A side's attack.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Adriano, Mario Balotelli, Hernan Crespo and Julio Cruz represent an over-stocked roster of finishers by any standards but, dazzled by the big city lights, the youngster still went ahead and put pen to paper.

Needless to say, Inter coach Jose Mourinho barely used him last term, and with Samuel Eto'o and Diego Milito arriving at the San Siro at the start of this season, there was no other place for Obinna to go than on secondment to Malaga.

A key man for Nigeria in their last-gasp qualification for World Cup 2010 with four goals, he desperately requires regular club football to make sure he retains his place in South Africa. National captain at the Beijing Olympics, he is renowned for his speed, strength, agility and ability to operate either through the middle or out wide.

Miroslav STOCH
TWENTE

OF ALL THE young players Chelsea have farmed out to gain experience, dynamic little Slovakia winger Miroslav Stoch has the best chance of returning and making it in the Premier League.

Lined up on the right-side of Twente's three-man attack, he has found the Eredivisie very much to his liking. He is too quick and tricky for most full-backs and a fine crosser of the ball. No wonder Twente's prolific striker Blaise Nkufo swears by him.

As well as his creative qualities, Stoch is no mean goalscorer. A leading marksman for Chelsea's Under-18 side, he scored a cracking piledriver from distance in Twente's 4-0 win over Groningen in October. The 20-year-old unquestionably has given his new club an extra dimension and, provided he stays fit, the Enschede outfit could be celebrating a first Dutch league title come May.

A disciple of the Brazilian game – particularly Ronaldo and Ronaldinho – he joined Chelsea from home-town club FC Nitra in 2006 and his battle with another brilliant Slovak youngster, Vladimir Weiss, for a starting place in his country's World Cup line-up promises to be enthralling.

Samuel Eto'o

The Cameroon striker on his new challenge in Serie A – and the life he left behind in Spain

Inter mission

After having so much success at Barcelona, were you surprised they let you join Internazionale?
That's a question that I can't answer myself. The coach has to do that. I heard and read what he said about there not being a "feeling" with me – and I keep asking myself what "feeling" means when you've always given everything on the pitch, always delivered and helped win every possible title. But I have to look forward. I'm at a great club and I think this season we will have a very good campaign.

After being used to playing such attacking football at Barca, is it hard adapting to a team where you have only Diego Milito and Wesley Sneijder helping you in attack?
I hope this will be corrected as we go along, because otherwise we will not go far.

What do you think of Jose Mourinho? He wasn't very complimentary about you and your Barca team in his autobiography...
That was at the time when Barcelona faced Chelsea and I had just a general impression. But now I can see him daily in training, I think that he is doing a good job and things are looking good.

You moved to Inter last summer as part payment for Zlatan Ibrahimovic's transfer to Barca. What do you think about him?
A great player. There is no problem with him and surely he will adapt to the tactical scheme that they have at Barcelona, although we are different in our approach to the game. I hope it works out for him.

Do you still feel positive towards Barca despite the circumstances of your exit?
Of course. I still have the club and the fans in my heart.

Do you miss La Liga?
A little, yes. It was a large chunk of my life. I spent 13 years in Spain and when you spend that amount of time somewhere it has a deep influence on you. But now I'm facing a new challenge. I have to adapt and try to succeed.

Speaking of success, you've enjoyed a bit of that over the years haven't you?
I've managed a few things, yes, and it's always a pleasure, but to keep winning you have to regard whatever you have already won as history. You must always start from scratch, find the strength to win again.

Are Inter bigger than Barcelona?
They are different. Inter share the football limelight in Milan while, with respect to Espanyol, Barcelona represents the city, and that's why they say it's "more than a club".

Are you a problem player?
No. People can say that if they want, but I don't accept it. I work hard at my job. Like everyone, I've had controversial moments in the past, but those are already forgotten.

Which specific moment would you consider to have been the most significant for you while in Spain?
Perhaps it was having Luis Aragones as my coach. He is like a father to me. I worked with him at Mallorca. I arrived [at Mallorca] on a low, because Real Madrid always sent me out on loan, and whenever the season ended I'd return to Madrid without a clear idea about my future. So I stayed at Mallorca and Aragones really shook me up. He talked to me a lot, he advised me and I stayed there for four seasons until I ended up at Barcelona. That's why I was so happy when he won the European Championship with the Spain national side, because I respect him so much as a coach and as a man.

Many say that you have a complex with Real Madrid because, though you played for their second team, Castilla, in 1995-96, you never established yourself...
It's not like that. Over time I became closer to Barcelona than Real Madrid, but I had very good friends among *Los Blancos*, people who I have fond memories of. Perhaps it's just that my character is very expressive and when I win, there is an outpouring of emotion.

What was your lowest point in Spain?
Without doubt, it was when I was on loan from Real Madrid at Espanyol in 1999. The coach, Miguel Brindisi, never played me and I felt depressed there and couldn't wait to return to Madrid.

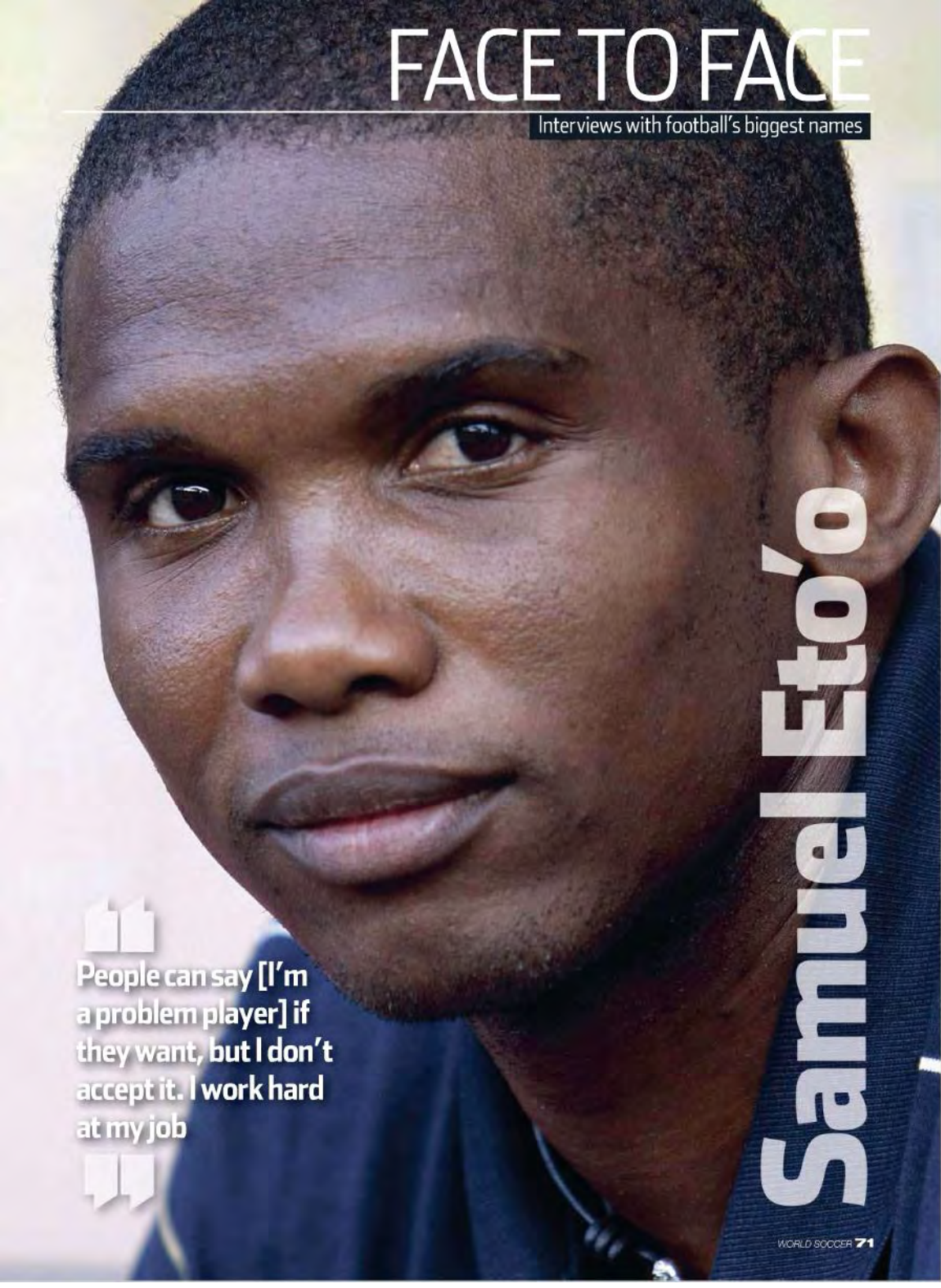
Do you have an idol in football?
Sure, Roger Milla, who was everything for Cameroon. I was lucky enough to have seen him play a great match when I was only six. At the end of the match, Milla threw his shirt to the fans and I was very lucky to catch it. Ever since then, I was fascinated by football. At the age of 12, I was already playing with people aged 20 without many problems.

How did you first move to Europe?
I was 15 when I made my debut for the national team. Then I found out that the game was being watched by Pirri [a Real Madrid legend in the 1960s and early 1970s] and he was the one who took me to Fabio Capello, who was the coach at Real Madrid. They loaned me straight to Leganes. I actually arrived in Madrid in February 1997 when I was 16. That early experience helped me to grow and become strong inside.

Do you still regard yourself as "running as a black man but living as a white man"?
That phrase has been discussed a lot, but I think it is not always understood what I meant by it. What I meant is that you have to sacrifice to live well. I like some luxuries, such as cars, but because I pay for them with what I earn, there's no debate. And while I do like to enjoy the good things in life, I also have a charity to help children in Cameroon and I feel good doing this. I feel like I am giving back everything that football gave me. I feel privileged to be able to do what I enjoy doing and that I also get paid to do it. That gives me great pleasure.

Do you think that this World Cup, the first to be played in Africa, may finally be won by an African team?
That's my dream, but we know how difficult it is. Cameroon, fortunately, have enjoyed some success over the years and I am already lucky enough to have an Olympic gold medal, from Sydney 2000, when we beat Spain in the Final. Who is to say that we can't do the same again in South Africa?

Interview by Dan Brennan



Samuel Eto'o

"People can say [I'm a problem player] if they want, but I don't accept it. I work hard at my job"

Sulaiman Al Fahim

The brash Emirati businessman on wheeling and dealing in Premier League clubs

I was pushed out of Portsmouth

YOU CAME to prominence through your dealings with Manchester City. Were you pushed out of the club?
No. My role was to find a good football club [for Sheikh Mansour], to buy it, to negotiate, to close the deal and to announce the purchase. That was my total involvement and I have done that. I was happy I chose the right club. I negotiated well and closed well, and you can see the result today. Every club fears Manchester City and they can beat any club.

Which other clubs did you look at?
I can't say, but in that November I got an offer to buy Portsmouth. I was looking at clubs from different rankings in the Premier League.

Why were you at Fratton Park for only 42 days?
I believe Peter Storrie [Portsmouth chief executive officer] from day one wanted the consortium of [Saudi property investor] Ali Al Faraj [because] he brought them in. With me there would be no overpayment, everything would be at the right time, with the right investment. Mine was £5million investment as equity. But they wanted £10m in two weeks. So I sold the club. But look how much the [Al Faraj] consortium has invested. It's only £1.8m. So where is the money they were asking me for? I was getting 100 emails a day. Why don't they care now the consortium hasn't paid this?

> The Al Faraj consortium has invested only £1.8m. So where is the money they were asking me for?

Do you believe Peter Storrie forced you out?
In the beginning he supported me so I don't know why he thought I wasn't the right guy. He was pushing me out, using the media and the club website.

What will your Portsmouth legacy be?
I am so happy with it [he retains a 10 per cent stake and is the club's chairman]. Who would have thought that by investing £5m you would get 10 per cent of a [Premier League] club? It's a good investment for me. There were only two choices for me: kick out the board and bring in my own people – which you can't do with Portsmouth at the moment – or sell the club. I let the management have the owner they liked. Many people saw this as a failure, but people will understand it is a good deal. Mid to long term, they will realise it was a success.

Has the experience put you off your involvement in football?
No. I get phone calls from the US, from Asia, saying: "Mr Sulaiman, help us to buy a club." Real businessmen don't ever look at my stake as a failure. Anybody, when they see the deal I have done, would be happy. People call me to buy and find opportunities in the Premier League. They also call me to open new football clubs in their own countries. My [new] company understands the football business, so I'm becoming more involved in it.

For someone looking to buy into a football club, which three represent the best value for money?
Looking at football clubs now, with £100m, it would be Portsmouth, Portsmouth and Portsmouth! They would be first. Second would be West Ham United, third Leeds United. Newcastle United are good for investors looking for history, image, but it is a long, long-term investment. In the Italian league there are one or two very good opportunities, such as Bologna. In the Spanish league, Levante. Opening a new club in India or a professional club in the US would be perfect.

There's a debate in the UK about merits of foreign ownership. Does a touch of xenophobia surround it?
People should not criticise foreign owners. Whether I am the owner or the owner is Chinese or from Hong Kong or Saudi Arabia, the reality is we are not the owners. It is owned by the supporters and the community. You invest in the service and if there's money to be made, then it's to be made. But in England, where there is so much passion, I don't like the word owner.

Don't foreign owners widen the gap between the fans and the club?
When a foreign owner buys the club he doesn't really know much about its management. We get advice from people who manage it. Take Portsmouth: Peter Storrie was there for seven years and has seen Milan [Mandaric], [Alexandre] Gaydamak, me for six weeks and Ali Al Faraj. None of the owners are involved in the day-to-day management of the club. It is the owners' jobs to secure finance, to expand the brand and help with cash flow, but not more than that.

This won't be the last we hear of you?
I've always said that I'll retire at 35. I am 32 now. My other project is a film that I'm investing in [*The Road to Darfur*]. I play myself, a philanthropist. I want people to see the real me, not what people have written about me. And not what people saw in my reality TV show, *Hydra Executives*. You know, my only problem was the first season wasn't me. It showed someone with ego, ignorant, selfish. I want this [film] to show my real, honest lifestyle.

Interview by James Montague

Emmanuel Adebayor

The Manchester City and Togo striker on why he moved to Eastlands

Why Arsene Wenger let me go

WHY DID you leave Arsenal?
It was a very difficult decision because I didn't want to leave Arsenal, to be honest, and, you know, they told me that they had an agreement with Man City and, whether I liked it or not, I had to leave. I was like: "I'm not leaving!" But at the end of the day, when I had a good discussion with the boss, I realised that he was trying to tell me. What didn't come out straight from his mouth is, if I stayed, I would not have a chance to play. But for me, there is nothing other than playing football.

So you went to Manchester City. What did they tell you about their ambitions?
We have a chance to bring up this team and make it one of the best in the world. That's why they brought in players like Carlos Tevez, Gareth Barry, Kolo Toure and myself. People treat me very well because I needed an ambition, I needed to write my own history, because I knew even if I stayed at Arsenal I couldn't play. And I couldn't make my own history there because a lot of big, big players, big names have passed before me.

Can Manchester City break into the top four this season?
Why not? We've got Barry, a world-class midfielder; we have Stephen Ireland, one of the best midfielders in the world; we've got Craig Bellamy, he's on fire at the moment. Tevez, myself, Robinho, Benjani [Mwaruwari] is coming back. I think, if those players are fit, why not? At the moment, it's good. You can see that all the big four are struggling a little bit. This year everything is open.

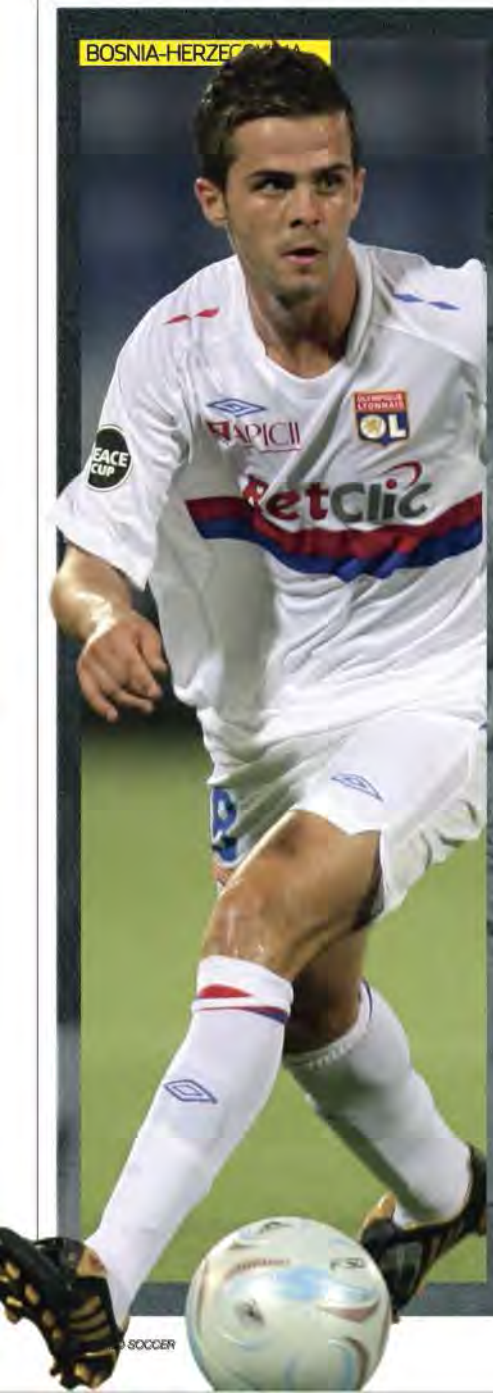
What does it mean for you, as an African, to have the World Cup in South Africa for the first time?
We are very pleased, very happy. It's like a dream come true. And, to start with, I am very happy with the Under-20 team of Ghana, the Black Starlets. They have just won the Under-20 World Cup for the first time so, you know, everything is coming our way this time. It's very good. It's very positive for us, as Africans, and we are very happy for that. We are very happy for those young lads, what they have done for us, it's like they start writing the history. I am very pleased we are organising this big party in 2010 in South Africa, one of the best, one of the biggest countries in Africa. We just want to enjoy it and try to organise one of the best and most memorable World Cups in history.

> Man City told me we have a chance to bring up this team and make it the best in the world

How much has African football grown in the last few years, because it seems everyone in Europe has got at least one or two African players?
Africans are in all the big teams. Inter Milan have [Sulley] Muntari and [Samuel] Eto'o. Chelsea have got Michael Essien and they have got Didier Drogba. You go to Barcelona and they've got [Seydou] Keita. You've got [Mahamadou] Diarra at Real Madrid. You have a lot of African players at the moment and we just have to believe that we can do it. What is going to happen in South Africa 2010? I think if my brothers believe that they can do it, yeah. If they are playing for Barcelona, [Inter] Milan, Chelsea, this means they've got the talent, they can do it, they can make that dream come true for all African people.

Interview by Pedro Pinto

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA



Miralem PJANIC

Blood and family for Lyon youngster

LYON MIDFIELDER Miralem Pjanic is the latest starlet to graduate from a Metz academy in eastern France that has overseen the formative years of such talents asRobert Pires, Emmanuel Adebayor and Louis Saha.

Pjanic, who was bought by Lyon from Metz for £6.6million in June 2008, is one of a dying breed: a player whose stock in trade is his creativity, a silky touch, wonderful vision, the capacity to deliver a decisive pass and the flair to veer away from the scripted.

Back in the early 1980s virtually every side in the French elite had an attacking orchestrator – Michel Platini at Saint-Etienne and Alain Giresse at Bordeaux, to name but two – but the playmaking well is almost dry these days, leaving 19-year-old Pjanic in a unique position to disprove the theory that today's game only exists for the pacy, powerful and athletic.

What he lacks in upper-body strength and speed over the ground, he more than makes up for with his dazzling ball skills.

"He is the sort of player who lives and breathes inventive football," says Yvon Pouliquen, the youngster's former coach at Metz. "He's that rare combination of virtuoso and instinctive maker of chances.

"He's always mentally alive. I've rarely seen anyone better at anticipating the movement of team-mates, of instantly choosing the right option. He just has an amazing ability to make others play well. As with all extraordinary players, time seems to stand still when he's in possession.

"I'd compare him to the old Paris Saint-Germain and Yugoslavia midfielder Safet Susic – someone who made things happen, who could dribble and pass with the very best. To a large extent Susic's career was a secret for those outside France and Bosnia, but I don't think Miralem will have the same difficulty."

Talent is not everything, though. Luck also has to be on your side and Pjanic was short-changed in that department last term – his first in Lyon colours. Played out of position on the flanks, his form was average and he was sidelined for a couple of months with a broken fibia.

When Lyon's long-serving Brazilian playmaker Juninho joined Al Gharafa of Qatar last summer, his place looked set to be taken by Ederson or Cesar Delgado. But when Pjanic was selected for a Champions League eliminator at home to Anderlecht he scored with a curling free-kick that Platini himself would have been proud of and lit up the night with his stylish approach work. Juninho's replacement had been found.

Pjanic was one-year old when his family fled their war-ravaged Bosnian town of Tuzla in 1991 to set up home in Luxembourg.

When he was 10 he was inducted into an elite programme for bright young Grand Duchy things and four years later he hopped across the border to the Metz academy. He went on to star for various Luxembourg junior sides – he once scored four times for the Under-17s in a 5-5 draw with Belgium – but his heart always belonged to Bosnia.

"I didn't need to think twice about it," he says. "It's a question of blood and family. I understand the disappointment of people in Luxembourg, but they know why I chose Bosnia. My country is one which has suffered and I'd like to help put a smile back on its face."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Lyon (Fra)
Country Bosnia-Herzegovina
Born April 2, 1990, in Zvornik
Previous club Metz (Fra)
International debut August 2008 v Bulgaria
International caps 14 (0 goals)

Eljero ELIA

Flying Dutch winger keeps his feet on the ground

HAMBURG'S NEW Dutch flier has already ruffled a few feathers since his £8.5million move from Twente last summer.

As electrifying on the right flank as on the left, the 22-year-old Elia may have a baby face and the exuberant ways of a schoolkid, but he is not lacking in maturity.

He could have gone for broke and joined Premier League Manchester City or Tottenham Hotspur, but instead chose Hamburg – an ambitious, well-supported club where he would be more likely to start every week. "You can't go straight from Twente to Real Madrid," said Elia with irrefutable logic.

To Hamburg keeper Frank Rost, the youngster's suggestion that he was only passing through seemed to smack of the arrogant and the uncommitted. Elia, though, argued he was only stating the obvious. He has no intention making the same mistake as his friend, Royston Drenthe, who, after leaving Feyenoord for Real Madrid, became the invisible man at the Bernabeu.

"I hope in the long-term to play at the highest possible level and I think it's best to take things gradually," says Elia, who was cut from the Ajax academy at 14 and had to resurrect his career at Den Haag and then Twente. "I'm very proud to play for Hamburg. I'm happy here and believe I will develop into a better player in the Bundesliga. On the pitch anything is possible for us – maybe even the title."

Elia had too much to lose in joining an overmanned big-name club.

Being a regular in the Holland squad – he scored their winner in a World Cup qualifier against Scotland last autumn – a place on a Champions League bench is of no use to him.

At this moment in time, Bundesliga stardom equals recognition in *Oranje*.

Nick Bidwell

HOLLAND

FACT FILE

Club Hamburg (Ger)
Country Holland
Born February 13, 1987, in Voorburg
Previous clubs Den Haag, Twente
International debut September 2009 v Japan
International caps 6 (1 goal)

SPAIN

FACT FILE

Club Athletic Bilbao
Country Spain
Born December 19, 1992, in Pamplona

Iker MUNIAIN

"Basque Messi" breaking records for fun

FOR Athletic Bilbao fans, the club's all-Basque identity is arguably more important than winning silverware. For their fix of regional pride, they revel in the exploits of academy graduates – and Muniain could be one of their best.

Nicknamed "Bart Simpson" for a supposed resemblance to the cartoon character, the kid has been breaking records all season. In July he became Athletic's youngest-ever first-teamer when he appeared as a sub in a Europa League tie against Swiss side Young Boys. He then netted in the return to become the club's rawest goalscorer too.

On equalising in the 2-2 Liga draw at Valladolid he took over as the Spanish elite's youngest marksman. Aged just 16 years and 289 days, Muniain might have grabbed himself a piece of history but no one would have known it from his laid-back reaction. "For me the most important thing was that I helped us win a point," he said.

The hype machine has already started and he will have to get used to talk of the "Basque Messi" as the expectations have gone through the roof.

Outstanding as a second striker or out wide on the right, the slight and small Spain Under-17 is quick and nimble on the ball, has no fear at all of physically-imposing defenders and obviously has an eye for goal – the way he pulls away from defenders to make room for himself at the back post is the mark of a master poacher.

"He made the step up to the first team look crazily easy," says Athletic's former Spain international Joseba Etxeberria. "He's a natural. Footballers of his class integrate without a problem. He has a long way to go but, if he continues on this path, I can see him turning into a player of genuine world class."

He recently extended his contract until 2015, with a £35million release clause to deter Europe's big hitters.

Nick Bidwell

Nicolas LODEIRO

URUGUAY

Under-20 star stepping up to senior role

IT WOULD BE fair to say 2009 was quite a year in the life of Nicolas Lodeiro. At the start, *World Soccer* picked him out as one of the stars of the South American Under-20 Championship in Venezuela; by the end, he was established as a vital figure for his club and an important one for his country as they get ready for the World Cup finals.

The stocky attacking midfielder caught the eye in Venezuela for the excellence of his left foot, his tight dribbling and his ability to make the game flow by choosing his options with extraordinary calm.

After the tournament all these virtues were instantly on show at senior level. Lodeiro recognised that the standard of football with Nacional was significantly higher than at Under-20 level but, with the club he had joined at the age of 12, he was able to make the transition with ease, setting up the play and adding goals to his game. He was outstanding as Nacional won the domestic title and was the team's top scorer in their run to the semi-finals of the Libertadores Cup – the best performance by a Uruguayan club for 20 years.

And to cap it all, after impressing observers in the Under-20 World Cup, he was thrown into the deep end in Uruguay's quest to qualify for South Africa.

His international debut came in the World Cup play-off game away to Costa Rica when Diego Lugano forced home the only goal from his corner – the delivery on set pieces is yet another enormous strength to his game. But Lodeiro was sufficiently cool-headed and self-aware to realise that on a sub-standard artificial pitch in San Jose he had not been at his best. "I can't be happy with my performance," he said. "I couldn't get into the game."

There were no such recriminations four days later in Montevideo. In the high-pressure atmosphere of the second leg, Lodeiro produced a man-of-the-match performance of dazzling promise, full of bright ideas and precision passing.

Uruguay's strikers have suffered from the team's lack of midfield quality, with top striker Diego Forlan often having to drop deep to help create chances. Lodeiro would seem to solve that problem. He clicked at once with Forlan, his presence allowing the Atletico Madrid attacker to operate closer to goal.

"The maestro [Uruguay national team coach Oscar Tabarez] put his faith in the youngster and has a No10 [though Lodeiro favours 14] for years to come," was the verdict of *El Pais* newspaper. "Nico came of age."

The player himself said: "This is the best moment of my life, and I have to enjoy it to the full. It went well for me. I wanted to contribute a grain of sand to the team effort, and I think I was able to do it."

If Lodeiro continues the rate of progress that he showed last year, he will have contributed an entire desert by the time he is through.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Nacional
Country Uruguay
Born March 21, 1989, in Paysandu
International debut November 2009 v Costa Rica
International caps 2 (0 goals)
Honours Uruguayan championship 2008-09

FIVE TO FOLLOW: UNDER-17 WORLD CUP STARLETS

Nick Bidwell profiles the youngsters who impressed in Nigeria

Club/Country Atletico Madrid/Spain
Born August 25, 1992
Position Forward

BORJA

THE tournament's joint-top goalscorer was an explosive mix of power, technique and instinct, and his exploits with the Under-17s will not have come as a surprise to anyone connected with Atletico Madrid.

With the club since the age of five, he has been a prodigy from the word go, doing even better in the youth team than former boy wonder Fernando Torres. The pair, however, are not similar in style as Borja is more of a target man and especially lethal in the air. The son of the club's goalkeeping coach, Miguel Baston, he is already training with the first team.

Club/Country Atletico Madrid/Uruguay
Born January 18, 1992
Position Midfielder

Sebastian GALLEGOS

ON the evidence of this tournament, the Uruguayans have in their possession the most gifted attacking midfielder since Enzo Francescoli strutted his stuff.

Bright and lively of thought and movement, and with velvety ball skills, he was never short of an eye-of-the-needle through ball. Also scored four times himself; against South Korea, Algeria, Iran and Spain.

Once with Montevideo outfit Danubio, he signed a five-year contract with Atletico Madrid last summer and currently plays for their B team.

Club/Country My People FC/Nigeria
Born December 23, 1992
Position Forward

Sani EMMANUEL

FOUR times he came on as a second-half substitute, three times he spearheaded Nigerian victories – scoring a penalty in the final group match against Argentina and getting doubles to see off New Zealand and Spain at the round-of-16 and semi-final stages.

Firepower was not his only commodity. The lung-busting runs he never stopped making were the last thing tired opposition defenders needed and he also did a full shift of closing down and tackling back. Ironically, the one game he started – the Final with Switzerland – was the only tie the Eaglets lost. But for sheer impact, his five goals in 221 minutes of playing time fully merited the Golden Ball as the competition's best player.

Plays for My People FC, a church-based club in Lagos which specialises in giving opportunities to disadvantaged kids.

Club/Country Zob Ahan/Iran
Born March 9, 1992
Position Defender

Ali GOUDARZI

HIGHLY effective centre-back and vice-captain who caught the eye in the opening phase when the Iranians kept three consecutive clean sheets, against Gambia, Colombia and Holland.

Strong in the tackle, athletic and astute in his positioning, he looked thoroughly at ease, no doubt helped by the presence in the Iran defence of Zob Ahan team-mates Bahman Maleki and Iman Shirazi. A cornerstone of the Under-16 side which won the Asian title in Uzbekistan in 2008, conceding just three goals in the process, he proved himself an excellent organiser.

Club/Country Aston Villa/Switzerland
Born January 31, 1992
Position Goalkeeper

Benjamin SIEGRIST

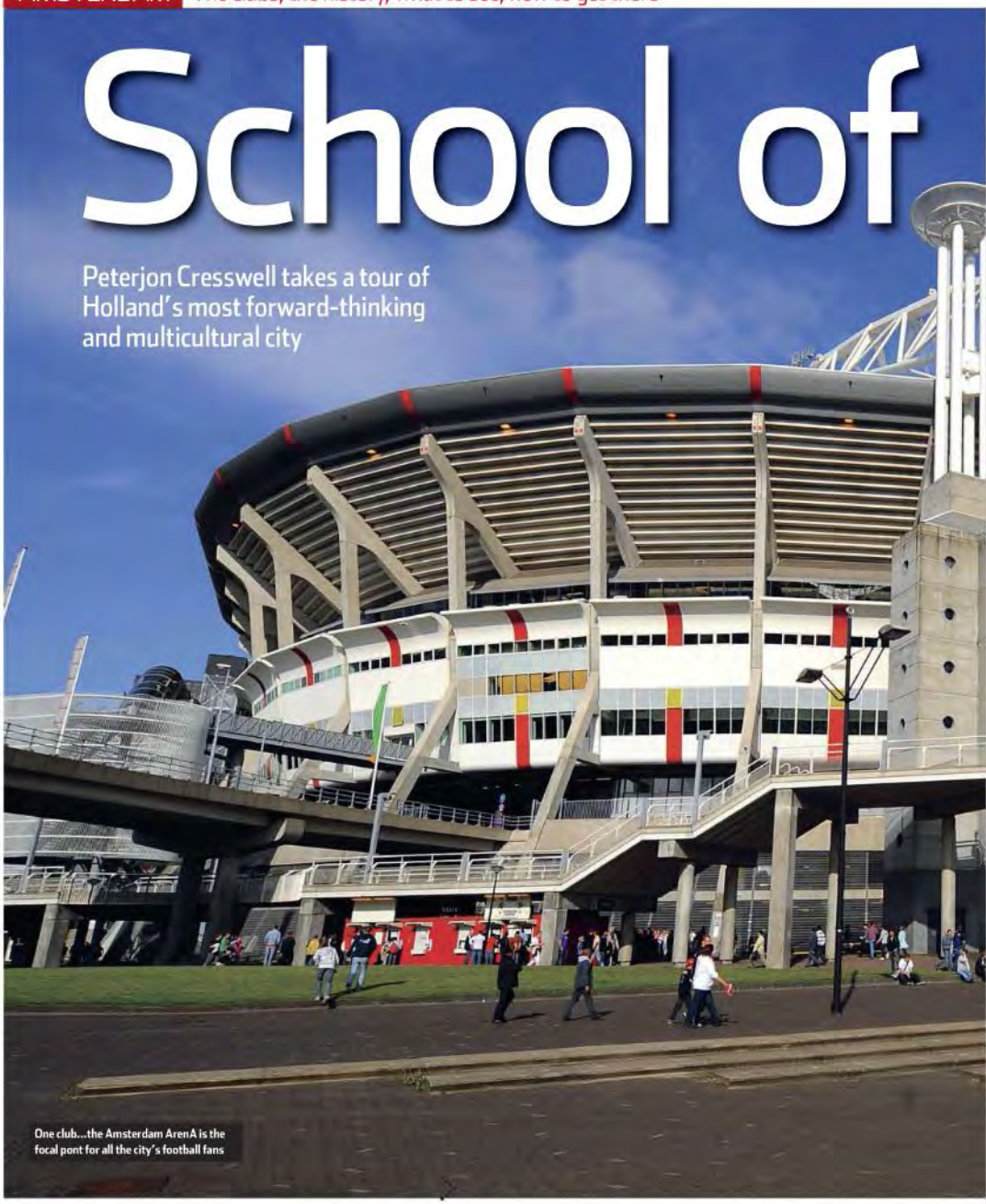
EASILY the most accomplished keeper at Nigeria 2009, he was a class apart. Courageous, imposing physically, well-coordinated, quick-off his line and adept at turning himself into the biggest possible barrier.

An icy temperament is another plus, demonstrating it when facing a penalty in the quarter-final with Italy. With Siegrist pointing to his right as Marco Fossati prepared to take the kick, the latter opted to go for the opposite corner, where the keeper was gratefully waiting to save. Some would call it gamesmanship, others supreme self-confidence. He spent six years at local club Basle before moving to Aston Villa in the Premier League in January 2009.

AMSTERDAM The clubs, the history, what to see, how to get there

School of

Peterjon Cresswell takes a tour of Holland's most forward-thinking and multicultural city



One club...the Amsterdam ArenA is the focal pont for all the city's football fans

excellence

AS COSMOPOLITAN as the city they represent, Ajax are a school of footballing excellence – branded by the famous thick red stripe running down their white shirts – from which three generations of star pupils have emerged to make their mark and win European silverware: the Ajax of Johan Cruyff of the 1970s; the Ajax of Marco Van Basten (with Cruyff as coach) of the 1980s; and Louis Van Gaal's young Ajax of the 1990s, who heralded a new era with the opening of the futuristic Amsterdam ArenA in 1996.

Today's stadium is a world away from the neighbourhood feel of the club's former home of De Meer, where club icon Cruyff was raised. As a boy, he lived nearby and his mother used to take in the club's laundry.

In the early amateur days, the city could boast a handful of top-flight clubs in the then-modest Dutch league. RAP Amsterdam won five league titles in the 1890s, while three cross-town rivals – Blauw Wit, De Volewijckers and DWS – merged to form FC Amsterdam in the 1970s and reached the quarter-finals of the 1974-75 UEFA Cup, beating Internazionale on route.

Now, however, Ajax are Amsterdam's flagship club and when they win a trophy the whole city turns out in celebration on the Leidseplein.

It was at the Cafe Oost Indie, on the nearby canal-side Kalverstraat, that a group of local businessmen met to form Ajax, on March 18, 1900. The

THE STADIUMS

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Opened in 1996 in the formerly neglected district of Bijlmer, the 51,000-capacity stadium with its retractable roof hosted the 1998 Champions League Final and several European Championship games in 2000.

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Built for the 1928 summer Games, the 31,600 capacity was later increased to 64,000 and the ground was used by Ajax for European games until the Amsterdam ArenA was completed. Now home to a museum – the Olympic Experience Amsterdam – it is no longer used for football.

new club enjoyed reasonable early success, notching up pre-war title wins under English coach Jack Reynolds at the modest De Meer stadium. But it wasn't until the mid-1960s that the club really took off.

Coached by disciplined tactician Rinus Michels, Ajax played in an adventurous 4-2-4 formation, based around teenage prodigy Cruyff and swift winger Piet Keizer. Although they won three Dutch titles in a row, it was a 5-1 thumping of Liverpool in the European Cup of 1966-67 that really made people sit up and take notice.

Surrounded by Horst Blankenburg, Ruud Krol, Johan Neeskens and Gerrie Muhren, Cruyff shone like few others and a European Cup Final defeat to Milan in 1969, was avenged at Wembley two years later with a 2-0 win over Panathinaikos.

With Romanian coach Stefan Kovacs taking over the helm, Ajax adopted "Total Football", a fluid 4-3-3 system in which all outfield players were interchangeable, team-mates anticipating runs from deep in defence, not least by the attacking sweeper. The conductor was Cruyff and Ajax dominated the European Cup for two more seasons, beating Inter and Juventus in the Finals of 1972 and 1973.

Dip in form

When Cruyff and Neeskens headed for Spain the following season, Ajax's form dipped – until the arrival of 17-year-old striker Van Basten. With Cruyff back as coach, Van Basten helped Ajax to the European Cup-winners Cup in 1987 before leaving for Italy. Poor league form also saw Cruyff depart, though Ajax did make it through to another Cup-winners Cup Final in 1988.

Under Leo Beenhakker, Ajax struggled to match a dominant PSV Eindhoven and it took the more adventurous Louis Van Gaal – who had been his assistant – for Ajax to find their old touch. A UEFA Cup win in 1992 featured the phenomenal talents of Dennis Bergkamp, who was later replaced by Finland striker Jari Litmanen.

A new young side nurtured at the Ajax Academy came to the fore under Van Gaal. With the return of 1987 veteran Frank

Three in a row...Ajax line up before the 1973 European Cup Final v Juventus

Danger man...striker Suarez (right) helped Ajax to a 5-1 thrashing of Feyenoord in November

Rijkaard, Van Gaal's youngsters swept to Champions League glory in 1995, with a 1-0 win over Milan in the Final courtesy of 19-year-old Patrick Kluivert. The team soon broke up, first Clarence Seedorf going, then Edgar Davids and Finidi George leaving a year later after Ajax again made the Final, only to lose to Juventus on penalties in 1996. Marc Overmars, the De Boer brothers and goalkeeper Edwin Van der Sar also departed and Ajax started to become known as a selling club. After Van Gaal went to Spain, the club suffered a couple of wayward years.

Once Ronald Koeman took over as coach in 2002, Ajax won the double thanks to Romanian captain Cristian Chivu and an impressive young Rafael Van der Vaart. A creditable Champions League run to the quarter-final in 2002-03 ended with an injury-time winner by eventual victors Milan but proved a valuable shop window for Mido and Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

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The further sales of young talents such as Wesley Sneijder, Ryan Babel and, later, Klaas-Jan Huntelaar, attracted criticism, though the arrival of Luis Suarez brought a prolific goalscorer to the ArenA.

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AMSTERDAM SURVIVAL GUIDE

Going Dutch

● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT
Schiphol airport is 12 miles south-west of the city centre and connected by regular trains (€3.90) to Centraal station, which is 20 minutes away. A taxi will cost €35-€40.

● HOTELS & INFORMATION
The tourist information office is outside Centraal Station. The Hotel V (Victorieplein 42, +31 20 662 3233, www.hotelv.nl, €140) is convenient for the ArenA. Even closer is the Mercure Hotel Amsterdam aan de Amstel (Joan Muyskenweg 10, +31 20 665 8181, www.mercure.com, €90).

● EATING & DRINKING
For classic Dutch cuisine – and to check out the old lights from the De Meer stadium, try Amsterdam (Watertorenplein 6, +31 20 682 2666). Close to another former Ajax haunt – the Olympic Stadium – Vakzuid (Olympisch Stadion 35, +31 20 570 8400) has world cuisine and weekend DJs. For Surinamese fare and an easy hop to the ArenA, try Riaz (Bilderdijkstraat 193, +31 20 683 6453), which is a Ruud Gullit fave. Bars around the ArenA are bland and many fans prefer the Hesp (Weesperzijde 131), which is located by Amstel station. Opposite the old De Meer stadium, De Meerzicht (on the corner of Middenweg and Brinkstraat) is dotted with Ajax souvenirs. The Melkweg (Lijnbaansgracht 234A, www.melkweg.nl) has live music and DJs, as does the Paradiso (Weteringschans 6-8, +31 20 626 4521, www.paradiso.nl). On the same metro line as the ArenA, the Powerzone (Daniel Goedkoopstraat 1-3, www.thepowerzone.nl) is very popular at weekends.

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT
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Jan 24 Ajax v AZ
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Nations Cup clash

Having already met in a 2010 World Cup qualifying group, Ayila Yussuf of Nigeria (right) and Mozambique's Paito will come face-to-face once again in Group C of the African Nations Cup finals in Lubango, Angola. More information, page 85.

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ANGOLA

Steady start for Jose

Portuguese coach Manuel Jose began his reign as boss of the African Nations Cup hosts with a 1-1 draw at home to Congo in Luanda.

AZERBAIJAN

Vogts commits

Berti Vogts has signed a new two-year deal to coach Azerbaijan. The 62-year-old, who led his native Germany to victory at Euro 96, took charge in March 2008.

Decent start...Advocaat

BELGIUM

So far, so good

Dick Advocaat steered the national team to their third win in four games since he took charge as coach with a 2-0 victory over Qatar.

BOTSWANA

Temp gets the job

Interim boss Stanley Tshosane was appointed full-time coach of the national team.

BULGARIA

Berbatov becomes the country's all-time best

Dimitar Berbatov scored twice in the 4-1 friendly win in Malta to become his country's record international goalscorer.

The 28-year-old Manchester United striker

78 players Diego Maradona has used since taking over as coach of Argentina in November 2008

RESULTS

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Q (in tables) = qualified for the finals

AFRICA
3rd stage

Group A

Nov 14 - Fes
Morocco 0
Cameroon 2 (Webo 19, Eto'o 52)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)
Morocco: Lamyaghri - El Adoua, Hermach, El Moutaqui, Zerouali (Sekkat 70), Chihani, Oulhaj, El Ahmadi, Dirar (Baha 54), Benjelloun (Alisoui 58), Taaralit.
Cameroon: Kameni - Assou-Ekotto, N Song, A Song, Nkoulou, Geremi, Makoun, Nguemo (Somen 78), Emana (Mbia 68), Webo (Eyong 81), Eto'o.

Nov 14 - Lome
Togo 1 (F Ayite 71)
Gabon 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Seechurn (Mrs)
Togo: Tchagouni - Eninful, Akakpo, Mamah, Romao, Gakpe (Kpatoumbi 83), Amewou, Toure, J Ayite (M Salifou 68), Dossevi (F Ayite 61), Adebayor.
Gabon: Dwono - Ambourouet, Ecuele, Meye, Moundounga, Mbanangoye, Brou, Moubamba (Issiemou 65), Moulounguil (F Do Marcolino 84), Kessamy, Cousin (P Aubameyang 40).

WC QUALS: AFRICA - 3RD STAGE - GP A - FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	2	13
Gabon	6	3	0	3	9	7	9
Togo	6	2	2	2	3	7	8
Morocco	6	0	3	3	3	8	3

Group B

Nov 14 - Nairobi
Kenya 2 (Oliech 15, Wetende 77)
Nigeria 3 (Martins 60, 81, Aiyegbeni 64)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Maillet (Sey)
Kenya: W Ochieng - M Olieno, F Ochieng, Njoroge, G Owino, J Owino, Mugabi (Wetende 73), Ake (Echesa 78), Opiyo, P Onyango (Ooko 51), Oliech.
Nigeria: Enyeama - Yobo, Nwaneri, Echiejile, Eneramo (Obinna 61), Mikel, Ajilore (Martins 46), Olofinjana (Ayila 30), Apam, Odemwingie, Aiyegbeni.

Nov 14 - Maputo
Mozambique 1 (Dario 83)
Tunisia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Doue (IvC)
Mozambique: Kapango - Genito (Goncalves 65), Pailo, Mexer, Simao, Miro (Hagi 78), Domingues, Campira, Dario Klasi, Dario, Tico-Tico.
Tunisia: Mathlouthi - Ghezal, Ragued, Jemaa, Hagui, Ben Saada (Dhaouadi 76), Mikael, Soussi, Chermiti (Darragi 63), Korbi, Ben Khalifallah (Zitouni 46).

WC QUALS: AFRICA - 3RD STAGE - GP B - FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria (Q)	6	3	3	0	9	4	12
Tunisia	6	3	2	1	7	4	11
Mozambique	6	2	1	3	3	5	7
Kenya	6	1	0	5	5	11	3

Group C

Nov 14 - Cairo
Egypt 2 (Zaki 3, Moteab 90)
Algeria 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 75,000. **Ref:** Damon (SAf)
Egypt: El Hadary - Al Muhamadi, Fathi, El Sakka, H Said, Moawad, Hassan, Soliman (Barakat 56), Aboutraika, Zaki (Moteab 66), Zidan (Eid 78).
Algeria: Gaouaoui - Bougherra, Halliche (Laifaoui 72), Yahia, Meghni, Mansouri, Matmour (Bezzaz 46), Ziani, Belhadj, Lemmouchia, Saifi (Ghezzal 62).

Nov 14 - Kigali
Rwanda 0
Zambia 0
Att: 18,000. **Ref:** Ambaya (Lby)
Rwanda: Ndayishimiye - Aniweta, Bokota (Said 65), Mutesa, Kalisa, Abbas, Kapet (Gakola 85), Eale (Karekezi 46), Mugiraneza, Gasana, Niyonzima.
Sent off: Mugiraneza 90min
Zambia: Mweene - Chumanga (F Katongo 46), Mbola, Musonda, D Banda, Mulenga, Chiwalu, Chivuta (Kasonde 67), Kalaba (Singuluma 75), Njobvu, C Katongo.

WC QUALS: AFRICA - 3RD STAGE - GP C - FINAL*	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
*Algeria	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
*Egypt	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
Zambia	6	1	2	3	2	5	5
Rwanda	6	0	2	4	1	8	2

**Algeria and Egypt went into a group-deciding play-off after finishing with identical records*

Play-off

Nov 18 - Omdurman, Sudan
Algeria 1 (Yahia 40)
Egypt 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Maillet (Sey)
Algeria qualified for the finals
Algeria: Chaouchi - Bougherra, Halliche, Yahia (Zaoui 66), Meghni (Matmour 58), Yebda, Mansouri, Ziani, Belhadj, Saifi (Ghilas 85), Ghezzal.
Egypt: El Hadary - Al Muhamadi, Gomaa, El Sakka (Eid 75), H Said, Fathi (Abd Rabo 46), Moawad, Hassan, Aboutraika, Moteab, Zaki (Zidan 46).

Group D

Nov 14 - Omdurman
Sudan 1 (Abakar pen 45)
Benin 2 (Omotoyossi pen 34, Koukou 62)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 600. **Ref:** Jedidi (Tun)
Sudan: Rulel - El Basha, Balla, Kafi, Ahmad, M Abdalla, Abakar (Maaz 46), Idris, Tahir (R Abdalla 42), El Tahir (Makeen 70), Ali.
Benin: R Chitou - Singbo, Adenon, Chrysostome, Angan (Koukou 46), Boco, Kobena (Ahouoya 83), Ogounbiyi, Sessegnon, S Tchomogo, Omotoyossi (Aoudou 70).

Nov 15 - Kumasi
Ghana 2 (M Amoah 65, Annan 83)
Mali 2 (Fane 23, Ndiaye 68)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 39,000. **Ref:** Diatta (Sen)
Ghana: Kingson - Inkoom, Paintsil, Annan, Quartey, Essien (Agyemang-Badu 82), Appiah (Asamoah 61), Muntari (Addy 79), E Addo, M Amoah, Gyan.
Mali: Mahamadou Sidibe - Fane, A Coulibaly, Tamboura, D Diakite, Soumare, L Diarra, M Diallo (Yattabare 86), M Maiga (Ndiaye 39), Sidi Keita (Berthe 90), Bagayoko.

WC QUALS: AFRICA - 3RD STAGE - GP D - FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	3	13
Benin	6	3	1	2	6	6	10
Mali	6	2	3	1	8	7	9
Sudan	6	0	1	5	2	9	1

Group E

Nov 14 - Ouagadougou
Burkina Faso 1 (Dagano 47)
Malawi 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Abd El Fatah (Egy)
Burkina Faso: Diakite - Ginanou, M Tall, Koulibaly, Kabore, Yameogo (Zoundi 58), Roumba, Pitroipa (Nikiema 28), Kone (Koffi 67), Bamogo, Dagano.
Malawi: Sanudi - Wadadawa, Sangala, Kamanga, Chavula, C Msowoya (Kanjenda 46), Mwakasungula, Mponda, Ngwira (D Banda 34), Kamwendo, Mwafulirwa (Nyirenda 66).

Nov 14 - Abidjan
Ivory Coast 3 (Kouassi 16, 31, Tiene 67)
Guinea 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Mavange (Zim)
Ivory Coast: Zogbo - Eboue, Bamba, Y Toure, N'Dri (Gosso 70), Tiene, Zokora, Angous, Kouassi, K Keita (Doumbia 78), Dindane (E Kone 82).
Guinea: Kemoko Camara - A Camara, Ibrahima Sory Bangoura, Zayatte, I Camara, Diallo, Keita, Constant (Ismael Bangoura 65), Feindouno, Youla (Diawara 83), Ibrahima Bangoura (Bah 46).

WC QUALS: AFRICA - 3RD STAGE - GP E - FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast (Q)	6	5	1	0	19	4	16
Burkina Faso	6	4	0	2	10	11	12
Malawi	6	1	1	4	4	11	4
Guinea	6	1	0	5	7	14	3

In addition, the top three in each group qualified for the 2010 African Nations Cup (see finals match schedule on opposite page). Nations Cup hosts Angola qualified automatically

EUROPE
Play-offs, 1st legs

Nov 14 - Athens
Greece 0
Ukraine 0
Att: 39,045. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Greece: Tzorvas - Vyntra, Spyropoulos, Papastathopoulos, Kyrgiakos, Moras, Katsouranis, Karagounis, Salpigidis (Mitroglou 71), Samaras, Gekas (Haristeas 65).
Ukraine: Pyatov - Rakitskyi, Kucher, Khacheridi, Kobin, Mikhalik, Tymoshchuk, Husiev (Aliyev 83), Rotan (Yarmolenko 46), Shevchenko, Milevskyi.

Nov 14 - Lisbon
Portugal 1 (Bruno Alves 31)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 60,588. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Portugal: Eduardo - Paulo Ferreira, Ricardo Carvalho, Bruno Alves, Duda, Deco (Tiago 84), Pepe, Raul Meireles, Nani (Fabio Coentrao 60), Liedson, Simao (Hugo Almeida 88).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Jahic, Nadarevic, Spahic, Ibricic, Rahimic, Misimovic (Muslimovic 82), Muratovic (Pjanic 87), Salihovic, Ibisevic, Dzeko.

Nov 14 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 0
France 1 (Anelka 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 74,103. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Rep Ireland: Given - O'Shea, Dunne, St Ledger, Kilbane, Lawrence (S Hunt 80), Whelan, Andrews, Duff (McGeady 76), Keane, Doyle (Best 71).
France: Lloris - Sagna, Gallas, Abidal, Evra, A Diarra, Gourcuff, L Diarra, Anelka, Gignac (Malouda 90), Henry.

Nov 14 - Moscow
Russia 2 (Bilyaletdinov 40, 51)
Slovenia 1 (Pecnik 88)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 71,600. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Russia: Akinfeev - Anyukov, Ignashevich, V Berezutsky, Zhirkov, Zyryanov, Semak (Bystrov 81), Bilyaletdinov, Denisov, Arshavin, Pavlyuchenko (Sychev 86).
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Cesar, Brecko, Suler, Jokic, Radosavljevic, Koren, Kirm (Pecnik 82), Dedic (Ljubijankic 67), Birsa (Stevanovic 77), Novakovic.

Play-offs, 2nd legs

Nov 18 - Zenica
Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
Portugal 1 (Raul Meireles 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Rosetti (Ita)
Portugal 2-0 on agg
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Nadarevic, Jahic, Pandza, Bajramovic (Berberovic 83), Pjanic, Ibricic, Salihovic, Medunjanin (Muslimovic 46), Ibisevic, Dzeko. *Sent off: Salihovic 77min.*
Portugal: Eduardo - Paulo Ferreira, Ricardo Carvalho, Bruno Alves, Duda, Tiago, Pepe, Raul Meireles, Nani (Edinho 73), Liedson (Miguel Veloso 90), Simao (Deco 80).

Nov 18 - Saint-Denis
France 1 (Gallas 104)
Republic of Ireland 1 (Keane 33)
Aet. **HT:** 0-1. **90mins:** 0-1. **Att:** 79,145.
Ref: Hansson (Swe)
France 2-1 on agg
France: Lloris - Sagna, Escude (Squillaci 9), Gallas, Evra, A Diarra, L Diarra, Gourcuff (Malouda 87), Anelka, Henry, Gignac (Govou 56).
Rep Ireland: Given - O'Shea (McShane 67), Dunne, St Ledger, Kilbane, Lawrence (McGeady 107), Whelan (Gibson 63), Andrews, Duff, Keane, Doyle.

Nov 18 - Maribor
Slovenia 1 (Dedic 44)
Russia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 12,510. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Agg 2-2. Slovenia on away goals
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Cesar, Brecko, Suler, Jokic, Radosavljevic, Koren, Kirm, Dedic (Stevanovic 90+), Birsa (Pecnik 78), Novakovic.
Russia: Akinfeev - Anyukov, Ignashevich, V Berezutsky, Zhirkov, Yanbaev (Semak 46), Zyryanov, Bilyaletdinov (Pogrebnyak 77), Denisov, Arshavin, Pavlyuchenko (Kerzhakov 46).
Sent off: Kerzhakov 69min, Zhirkov 90min.

has now scored 48 times in 74 games for Bulgaria.

After the game, Levski Sofia goalkeeper Dimitar Ivankov announced his international retirement.

DENMARK

Player of the year sets sights on further glory

Nicklas Bendtner has been voted Denmark's player of the year. The award, voted for by Danish supporters, comes after his impressive displays and crucial goals helped secure the country's place in this summer's World Cup finals..

Fans' favourite...Bendtner

Bendtner says his next ambition is to be the No1 marksman in South Africa.

"I want to be top scorer in the Premier League, top scorer at the World Cup and, within five years, I want to be among the best strikers in the world," explained the Arsenal striker.

FRANCE

Henry nearly quit after "cheat" storm

Barcelona's Thierry Henry has admitted he considered quitting international football after the furore that followed his deliberate handball in the 1-1 play-off draw against Republic of Ireland in Paris.

"I'm not the referee, but if I hurt someone I'm sorry," Henry said.

Shamed...Henry (right)

Nov 18 - Donetsk
Ukraine 0
Greece 1 (Salpigidis 31)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 31,643. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
Greece 1-0 on agg
Ukraine: Pyatov - Rakitskyi, Kucher, Khacheridi, Kobin, Mikhalik (Gai 66), Tymoshchuk, Aliyev (Seleznëv 58), Yarmolenko (Husiev 69), Shevchenko, Milevskyi.
Greece: Tzorvas - Vyntra, Spyropoulos, Moras, Kyrgiakos, Papastathopoulos (Pliatsikas 29), Katsouranis, Karagounis, Salpigidis, Samaras (Gekas 62), Haristeas (Tziolis 71).

Winners qualified for the finals

INTERCONTINENTAL PLAY-OFFS

Asia/Oceania

2nd leg

Nov 14 - Wellington
New Zealand 1 (Fallon 45)
Bahrain 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,184. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
New Zealand 1-0 on agg
New Zealand: Paston - Sigmund, Nelsen, Vicelich, Bertos, Lochhead, Brown (Boyens 90), McSilloy (Barron 54), Smeltz, Killen (Wood 83), Fallon.
Bahrain: Jaffer - Fataddi, Hubail (Taleb 85), Okwuwanne, Jalal (Abdulrahman 79), Salmeen, Aaish (Latif 71), Isa, Omar, S Mohamed, Baba.

CONCACAF/South America

1st leg

Nov 14 - San Jose
Costa Rica 0
Uruguay 1 (Lugano 21)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 19,500. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Costa Rica: Navas - Marin (R Fonseca 63), Miller (Diaz 77), G Martinez (Umana 23), Sirias, Azofeifa, Bolanos, Borges, Saborio, Centeno, Ruiz.
Sent off: Azofeifa 52min.
Uruguay: Muslera - Victorino, Lugano, Godin, Eguren, A Fernandez, Gonzalez, A Pereira, Lodeiro (J Rodriguez 61), Suarez (S Fernandez 81), Forlan.

2nd leg

Nov 18 - Montevideo
Uruguay 1 (Abreu 70)
Costa Rica 1 (Centeno 74)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Uruguay 2-1 on agg
Uruguay: Muslera - Scotti (Victorino 72), Lugano, Godin, M Pereira, Perez, Eguren, A Pereira, Lodeiro (A Fernandez 84), Suarez (Abreu 65), Forlan.
Costa Rica: Navas - Marin (Saborio 69), Miller, Umana, Herrera, Bolanos, Diaz, Borges (Barrantes 58), Centeno, Ruiz, V Nunez (R Fonseca 64).

Winners qualified for the finals

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP FINALS

To be played in Angola, January 10-31, 2010

Match schedule

Group A

In Luanda (except for Mali v Malawi)
Jan 10 Angola v Mali (17:00)
Jan 11 Malawi v Algeria (14:45)
Jan 14 Mali v Algeria (17:00)
Jan 14 Angola v Malawi (19:30)
Jan 18 Angola v Algeria (17:00)
Jan 18 Mali v Malawi (Cabinda, 17:00)

Group B

In Cabinda (except for Burkina Faso v Ghana)
Jan 11 Ivory Coast v Burkina Faso (17:00)
Jan 11 Ghana v Togo (19:30)
Jan 15 Burkina Faso v Togo (17:00)
Jan 15 Ivory Coast v Ghana (19:30)
Jan 19 Burkina Faso v Ghana (Luanda, 17:00)
Jan 19 Ivory Coast v Togo (17:00)

Group C

In Benguela (except for Nigeria v Mozambique)
Jan 12 Egypt v Nigeria (17:00)
Jan 12 Mozambique v Benin (19:30)
Jan 16 Nigeria v Benin (17:00)
Jan 16 Egypt v Mozambique (19:30)
Jan 20 Egypt v Benin (17:00)
Jan 20 Nigeria v Mozambique (Lubango, 17:00)

Group D

In Lubango (except for Gabon v Zambia)
Jan 13 Cameroon v Gabon (17:00)
Jan 13 Zambia v Tunisia (19:30)
Jan 17 Gabon v Tunisia (17:00)
Jan 17 Cameroon v Zambia (19:30)
Jan 21 Gabon v Zambia (Benguela, 17:00)
Jan 21 Cameroon v Tunisia (17:00)

Quarter-finals

Jan 24 Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (Luanda, 17:00) (QF1)
Jan 24 Gp B 1st v Gp A 2nd (Cabinda, 20:30) (QF2)
Jan 25 Gp C 1st v Gp D 2nd (Benguela, 17:00) (QF3)
Jan 25 Gp D 1st v Gp C 2nd (Lubango, 20:30) (QF4)

Semi-finals

Jan 28 QF1 winners v QF4 winners (Luanda, 17:00)
Jan 28 QF2 winners v QF3 winners (Benguela, 20:30)

Third-place play-off

Jan 30 (Benguela, 17:00)

Final

Jan 31 (Luanda, 17:00)

Kick-off times are local

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Q (in tables) = qualified for the finals

Group A

Nov 18 - Manama
Bahrain 4 (Abdulatif 20, Fataddi 28, Salman 64, Al Dali og 75)
Yemen 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Basma (Syr)

Nov 18 - Hong Kong
Hong Kong 0
Japan 4 (Hasebe 33, Sato 75, S Nakamura 84, Okazaki pen 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 13,254. **Ref:** Green (Aus)
Japan: Kawashima - Uchida, Tulio Tanaka, Nakazawa, Komano (Tokunaga 84), Hasebe, Endo (Abe 86), S Nakamura, Matsui, Okazaki, Okubo (Sato 60).

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	4	3	0	1	12	2	9
Bahrain	3	3	0	0	8	1	9
Yemen	3	1	0	2	2	6	3
Hong Kong	4	0	0	4	1	14	0

Remaining games
06.01.10 Bahrain-Hong Kong
06.01.10 Yemen-Japan
20.01.10 Yemen-Bahrain
03.03.10 Hong Kong-Yemen
03.03.10 Japan-Bahrain

Group B

Nov 14 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 2 (Al Mutawa 60, pen 88)
Indonesia 1 (Bambang 33)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)

Nov 14 - Muscat
Oman 1 (Ayil 16)
Australia 2 (Wilkshire 43, Emerton 83)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Sun (Chn)
Australia: Schwarzer - Williams, Neill, Moore, Chipperfield, Wilkshire, Culina, Bresciano (Carney 67), Emerton, Cahill (Holman 67), Kewell (Kisnorbo 89). *Sent off: Williams 15min.*

Nov 18 - Jakarta
Indonesia 1 (Budi 45)
Kuwait 1 (Ajab 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 36,000. **Ref:** Tojo (Jap)
Sent off: Ismed (Indonesia) 46min

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Australia	3	2	1	1	3	2	7
Oman	4	1	1	2	2	5	4
Indonesia	3	0	3	1	2	3	3

Remaining games
06.01.10 Indonesia-Oman
06.01.10 Kuwait-Australia
03.03.10 Australia-Indonesia
03.03.10 Oman-Kuwait

Group C

Nov 14 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 3 (Djeparov 46, Geynrikh 57, 85)
Malaysia 1 (Zaquan 68)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Moradi (Irn)
Sent off: Nasrig (Malaysia) 85min

Nov 18 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 1 (Baddrol 70)
Uzbekistan 3 (Gafurov 32, Nasimov 58, Kapadze 73)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Tan (Chn)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uzbekistan (Q)	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
UAE	2	1	0	1	5	1	3
Malaysia	3	0	0	3	2	11	0

Remaining games
06.01.10 UAE-Malaysia
03.03.10 Uzbekistan-UAE

Group D

Nov 14 - Beirut
Lebanon 0
China 2 (Yu Hai 44, Qu Bo 72)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Al Badwawi (UAE)
China: Yang Zhi - Du Wei, Feng Xiaoting, Zhao Peng, Rong Hao, Zhao Xuri, Hao Junmin (Zheng Zhi 57), Yang Hao, Yu Hai, Gao Lin (Zheng Long 90), Jiang Ning (Qu Bo 66).

Nov 14 - Hanoi
Vietnam 0
Syria 1 (Rafe 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Williams (Aus)

Nov 18 - Aleppo
Syria 0
Vietnam 0
Att: 18,000. **Ref:** Al Hilali (Oma)
Sent off: Le Cong Vinh (Vietnam) 89min

Nov 22 - Hangzhou
China 1 (Du Wei 19)
Lebanon 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 21,520. **Ref:** Breeze (Aus)
China: Yang Zhi - Du Wei (Sun Xiang 63), Feng Xiaoteng, Zhao Peng, Rong Hao, Zhao Xuri, Huang Bowen, Deng Zhuoxiang, Hao Junmin (Qu Bo 40), Yu Hai, Gao Lin (Han Peng 62).

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Syria (Q)	4	3	1	0	6	2	10
China	4	3	0	1	11	4	9
Vietnam	4	1	1	2	4	8	4
Lebanon	4	0	0	4	1	8	0

Remaining games
06.01.10 China-Syria
06.01.10 Lebanon-Vietnam
17.01.10 Vietnam-China
03.03.10 Syria-Lebanon

Group E

Nov 14 - Tehran
Iran 1 (Nekounam 72)
Jordan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
Sent off: Shelbaieh (Jordan) 74min
Iran: Mehdi Rahmati - Nosrati, P Nouri (Khalatbary 46), Aghili, Teymourian, Heydari (Kaebi 87), Nekounam, Madanchi, Shojaei (Majidi 65), Hajsafy, Ansarifard.

Nov 14 - Singapore
Singapore 1 (Fahrudin pen 64)
Thailand 3 (Suree pen 12, 81, Therdsak 76)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 22,183. **Ref:** Takayama (Jap)

Nov 18 - Bangkok
Thailand 0
Singapore 1 (Duric 37)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Abdullah (Qat)

Nov 22 - Amman
Jordan 1 (Deeb 78)
Iran 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,000. **Ref:** Albadwawi (UAE)
Iran: Mehdi Rahmati - Nosrati, P Nouri, Aghili, Kaebi, Teymourian, Heydari (Beigzadeh 77), Mobali (Meydavoudi 60), Hajsafy, Ansarifard (Borhani 85), Khalatbary.

GERMANY

Mark of respect

The friendly international against Chile, which was due to be played in Cologne on November 14, was cancelled following the tragic death of goalkeeper Robert Enke.

Meanwhile, nine different Germany players got on the scoresheet as they beat San Marino 11-0 in a European Under-21 qualifier.

GUINEA

National team closed down after defeat

Coaches Mamadi Souare, Foda Laye Camara and Mandjou Diallo were sacked and the national team dissolved by the youth minister, Fodeba Isto Keira, after Guinea lost 3-0 to Ivory Coast and failed to qualify for either the World Cup finals or the African Nations Cup.

"The Guinea national side has been dissolved for insufficient results and ill-discipline," said Keira.

Over...Guinea's Alhassane Keita (left)

IRAQ

FIFA take action

The Iraqi Football Association (IFA) has been suspended by FIFA due to governmental interference. The Iraqi Olympic Committee disbanded the IFA in November and government security forces seized control of IFA headquarters. As a result, FIFA has banned all Iraqi clubs and representative teams from international competition.

IVORY COAST

Kalou training bust-up

Salomon Kalou of Chelsea was dropped from Ivory Coast's squad for their final World Cup qualifier against Guinea after he kicked out at team-mate Abdoulaye Meite in training.

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	4	2	1	1	7	1	7
Singapore	4	2	0	2	4	10	6
Thailand	4	1	2	1	3	2	5
Jordan	4	1	1	2	2	3	4

Remaining games
06.01.10 Singapore-Iran
06.01.10 Thailand-Jordan
03.03.10 Iran-Thailand
03.03.10 Jordan-Singapore

Top two in each group qualify for the 16-team finals, to be played in 2011. Hosts Qatar qualify automatically, as do the best three sides from the 2007 Asian Cup finals – winners Iraq, runners-up Saudi Arabia and third-placed South Korea – and the winners of the AFC Challenge Cup in 2008 (India) and 2010

COSAFA CUP

(Council of Southern Africa Football Associations)

In Zimbabwe

Group A

Oct 17 - Harare
Zimbabwe 3 (Malajila 47, 55, Mwanjali 85)
Mauritius 0
HT: 0-0

Oct 19 - Harare
Lesotho 2 (Maile pen 55, pen 85)
Zimbabwe 2 (Malajila 6, Swekwenere 61)
HT: 0-1

Oct 21 - Harare
Mauritius 0
Lesotho 1 (Mokore 88)
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Ernest (Mauritius)

COSAFA CUP – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zimbabwe	2	1	1	0	5	2	4
Lesotho	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Mauritius	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

Tanzania withdrew

Group B

Oct 18 - Bulawayo
Comoros 0
Botswana 0

Oct 18 - Bulawayo
Swaziland 2 (Thwala 72, Dlamini 78)
Seychelles 1 (Laurence 6)
HT: 0-1

Oct 20 - Bulawayo
Botswana 1 (Boletang 56)
Swaziland 0
HT: 0-0

Oct 20 - Bulawayo
Seychelles 1 (Annacoura 53)
Comoros 2 (Ali 7, Mouigini 76)
HT: 0-1

Oct 22 - Bulawayo
Swaziland 3 (Thwala 35, Dlamini 55, Mthethwa 66)
Comoros 0
HT: 1-0

Oct 22 - Bulawayo
Seychelles 0
Botswana 2 (Moloi 6, Bolelang 36)
HT: 0-2

COSAFA CUP – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Botswana	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Swaziland	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Comoros	3	1	1	1	2	4	4
Seychelles	3	0	0	3	2	6	0

Group winners qualified for quarter-finals

Byes to quarter-finals:
Angola (represented by Under-20 side), Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa (represented by Development XI), Zambia

Quarter-finals

Oct 25 - Harare
Malawi 0
Mozambique 1 (Josemar 35)
HT: 0-1

Oct 25 - Harare
Namibia 0
Zambia 1 (S Sunzu 85)
HT: 0-0

Oct 26 - Bulawayo
South Africa Development XI 2 (Bacala 67, Manyisa 80)
Angola U-20 0
HT: 0-0

Oct 26 - Bulawayo
Zimbabwe 1 (Maphosa 89)
Botswana 0
HT: 0-0

Semi-finals

Oct 28 - Harare
South Africa Development XI 1 (Bacala 37)
Zimbabwe 1 (Morufu 54)
No extra-time. **HT:** 1-0
Zimbabwe 3-2 on pens

Oct 29 - Bulawayo
Mozambique 0
Zambia 2 (Sakala 8, F Sunzu 84)
HT: 0-1

Third-place play-off

Oct 31 - Bulawayo
South Africa Development XI 0
Mozambique 1 (Hagi 83)
HT: 0-0

Final

Nov 1 - Harare
Zimbabwe 3 (Mushekwi 26, 35, Malajila 45)
Zambia 1 (H Banda 24)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Helder (Ang)
Zimbabwe: Sibanda - Vheremu, Mwanjali, Mapemba, Nhongo, Rambanepasi, Maphosa, Rusike (Marere 71), Mushekwi (Marufu 81), Malajila, Semakweri.
Zambia: J Banda - Chisenga (Kisonge 39), Himonde, D Banda, Nyirenda, Mukuka, S Mwanza, H Banda, S Sunzu (Hachipuka 54), Luingu, Sakala (F Sunzu 63).

SURINAM INDEPENDENCE CUP

In Paramaribo

Oct 28
Dutch Antilles 1 (Rodriguez 41)
French Guiana 4 (Marlinon 5, 35, Turnfort 58, Pelage 87)
HT: 1-2

Oct 28
Surinam 0
Guyana 1 (Millington 58)
HT: 0-0

Oct 30
Guyana 1 (Millington 29)
Dutch Antilles 0
HT: 1-0

Oct 30
Surinam 4 (Emanuelson, Pinas x3)
French Guiana 0

Nov 1
French Guiana 0
Guyana 1 (Archer 57)
HT: 0-0

Nov 1
Surinam 1 (Valies 9)
Dutch Antilles 1 (Trenidad 28)
HT: 1-1

SURINAM INDEPENDENCE CUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guyana	3	3	0	0	3	0	9
Surinam	3	1	1	1	5	2	4
French Guiana	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
Dutch Antilles	3	0	1	2	2	6	1

UAE INTERNATIONAL CUP

In Al Ain City

Semi-finals

Nov 15
Iraq 1 (Bassim 88)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 0-0
Iraq: Mohammed Bassid - Mohammed Ali Karim, Ali, Salam, Bassim, Mehdi (Samir 52; Mustafa 83), Nashat, Karrar, Hawar (Muthana 60), Younis (Emad 52), Ala'a (Ali Salah 89).

Nov 15
United Arab Emirates 0
Czech Republic 0
No extra-time. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Dalkam (Jor)
United Arab Emirates 3-2 on pens
UAE: Nasir - Salim (Faiz 46), Kamali, Kasim, Dzabir, Vihajbi, Chadli (Rahman 46), Mubarak, Chamis (Abdalah 46), Chalil (Machbul 58), Silhi (Abbas 84).
Czech Republic: Drobny - Limbersky, Hubnik (Simunek 65), Rozehnal, Pudil, Matejovsky, Svec, Licka (Magera 79), Fillo (Papadopulos 62; Rajnoch 83), Necid, Hlousek (Blazek 62).

Third-place play-off

Nov 18
Azerbaijan 2 (Javadov 24, Abusov 89)
Czech Republic 0
HT: 1-0
Azerbaijan: Farhad - Medvedev, Levin, Allahverdiyev, Abusov, Sukurov, Abbasov, Mamedov (Pereira 90), Chertoganov (Sadigov 32), Javadov, Ramim (Nadirov 83).
Czech Republic: Grigar - Limbersky, Simunek, Rajnoch, Pudil (Hlousek 46), Licka, Holek (Rozehnal 80), Matejovsky, Papadopulos, Magera (Necid 63), Blazek (Svec 75).

Final

Nov 18
United Arab Emirates 0
Iraq 1 (Karim 20)
HT: 0-1

FRIENDLIES

Tuesday, November 3

Nov 3 - Cairo
Kuwait 5 (Neda 22, Ajab 77, 88, Al Mutawa 84, pen 85)
Kenya 0
HT: 1-0

Wednesday, November 4

Nov 4 - Talcahuano
Chile 2 (Gonzalez 73, Paredes 90)
Paraguay 1 (Cabral 69)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Chile: Veloso - Fuenzalida, P Contreras, Martinez, Cereceda, Millar, Aranguiz, Sagredo (Magalhaes 46), Vargas (Gonzalez 60), Paredes, Lorca.
Paraguay: Centurion - Benitez, Roman, Cabral, Pereira (Mencia 63), Molinas, Melgarejo (Riveros 63), Rojas (Ibarra 73), Nunez (Romero 46), Velasquez (Beltran 46), Gamarra (Robles 46).

Nov 4 - Singapore
Singapore 3 (Duric 10, 59, Noh Alam Shah 20)
Indonesia 1 (Ramdani 12)
HT: 2-1

Thursday, November 5

Nov 5 - Aswan
Egypt 5 (Moteab 8, 33, Zaki 19, Barakat 42, Raouf 86)
Tanzania 1 (Makasi 45)
HT: 4-1
Egypt: El Hadary (El Sayed) - Al Muhamadi, A Said (Salem), H Said (Fadhli), Moawad (Tawfik), Fathi, Soliman (Shaaban), Hassan (Eid), Barakat (Aboutraika), Zaki, Moteab (Raouf).

Friday, November 6

Nov 6 - Manama
Bahrain 5 (Fatadi 39, 90, Abdullatif 40, 57, Hasan pen 86)
Togo 1 (Wome 69)
HT: 2-0

Sunday, November 8

Nov 8 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 2 (Al Buraiky 42, Neda 89)
China 2 (Zheng Long 55, Han Peng 59)
HT: 1-0

Nov 8 - Pak Kret
Thailand 1 (Taeratep 59)
Syria 1 (Rafe pen 35)
HT: 0-1

Nov 8 - Sana'a
Yemen 1 (Mubarak 78)
Tanzania 1 (Boko 69)
HT: 0-0

Tuesday, November 10

Nov 10 - Tehran
Iran 1 (Ansarifard 54)
Iceland 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Waleed (Qat)

QATAR

Bid concessions

In a bid to boost their hopes of staging the 2022 World Cup, Qatar has said that it would allow Israel to take part on its territory if they qualified, despite not recognising the Jewish state.

Such an invitation would be unprecedented in the Arab world. It was also confirmed that the Muslim state would permit alcohol consumption during the tournament.

Beaten...Slovakia (in white)

SLOVAKIA

Cup setback

Slovakia's World Cup preparations took a knock when they lost 2-1 at home to fellow qualifiers Chile.

Stanislav Sestak cancelled out Gonzalo Jara's opener for the visitors before Esteban Paredes notched the winner.

SOUTH AFRICA

Parreira's second spell

Carlos Alberto Parreira began his second spell in charge of the national team with two goalless draws. The World Cup hosts were held by Japan at Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium in Port Elizabeth and Jamaica at Free State Stadium in Bloemfontein.

Parreira will take his team to Brazil in March for a one-month training camp.

Held...South Africa (in yellow) v Japan

Iran: Mehdi Rahmati - Beigzadeh (Kaebi 68), P Nouri, Nosrati, Aghili, Teymourian, Madanchi (Feshangchi 81), Hajsafy, Borhani (M Nouri 46), Khalatbary, Majidi (Ansarifard 40).
Iceland: Arason - B Saevarsson, A Skulason (B Sigurdsson 77), K O Sigurdsson, I Sigurdsson, Danielsson, O Skulason (Bjornsson 85), Gudnason (Athalsteinsson 46), Thoisteinsson (Takefusa 65), J Saevarsson (Vilhjalmsson 75), Helgusson (Johannesson 66).

Wednesday, November 11
Nov 11 - Sana'a
Yemen 2 (Hamash pen 13, Al Worafi 37)
Tanzania 1 (Mahmoud 34)
HT: 2-1

Friday, November 13
Nov 13 - Rouen, France
Paraguay 0
Qatar 2 (Montesin 57, 81)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lesage (Fra)
Paraguay: Bobadilla - J C Caceres, Caniza, Da Silva, Bonet, Ledesma, V Caceres, Torres (Martinez 77), E Benitez, Santa Cruz, Lopez (Rojas 65).

Nov 13 - Dammam
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al Saran 45, 57)
Belarus 1 (Verkhovtsov 77)
HT: 1-0

Saturday, November 14
Nov 14 - Luanda
Angola 1 (Flavio 2)
Congo 1 (Douniama 90)
HT: 1-0
Angola: Lama (Carlos Fernandes 18) - Kikas, Kali, Hernani (Mabina 46), Manluntas (Job 46), Gilberto, Flavio (Love 69), Tiquinho (Ze Kalanga 46), Dede (Chara 83), Kivuvu (Andre Macanga 49), Stelvio.
Sent off: Job
Congo: Onka - Okiele, Aubey, Abdoulaye, Ngangu, Ndinga, Louhoungou, Moutinys (Douniama 61), Salem (Mizai 70), Makouya, Moussitou (Sembolo 82).

Nov 14 - Ghent
Belgium 3 (Feltaini 39, Vermaelen 55, Mirallas pen 61)
Hungary 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Piccirillo (Fra)
Belgium: Gillet - De Roover, Lombaerts, Van Buyten, Vermaelen, Feltaini (Buffel 86), Geraerts (Kompany 46), Vertonghen, Mirallas (Lamah 76), De Sutter (Sonck 76), Hazard.
Hungary: Kiraly (Fulop 46) - Bodnar (Horvath 46), Vanczak, Juhasz, Halmosi, Sandor, B Toth (Tozser 64), Buzasky (Bodor 46), Dzsudzsak (Vadocz 83), Torghelle, Rudolf (Priskin 46).

Nov 14 - Doha, Qatar
Brazil 1 (Nilmar 47)
England 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Abdou (Qat)
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Maicon, Lucio, Thiago Silva, Michel Bastos, Gilberto Silva, Felipe Melo, Elano (Daniel Alves 65), Kaka (Julio Baptista 81), Nilmar (Carlos Eduardo 81), Luis Fabiano (Hulk 67).
England: Foster - Brown, Upson, Lescott, Bridge, Wright Phillips (Crouch 82), Barry (Hudolfesione 82), Jenas, Milner (A Young 87), Rooney, Bent (Defoe 55).

Nov 14 - Vukovci
Croatia 5 (Bilic 1, 46, Srna 10, Eduarde 24, 46)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Fabian (Hun)
Croatia: Subasic - Bartulovic, Simunic, Krizanac (Knezevic 46), Srna (Schelderleid 58), Pranjic, Kranjcar (Pokrivac 77), Vukojevic (Dujmovic 65), Gabric, Bilic (Jelavic 74), Eduardo (Klasnic 58).
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Rechsteiner, Oehri, Martin Stocklasa, Eberle, Hilzberger (Vogt 83), R Buchel, M Buchel (Kieber 69), Hasler, Frick (Christen 37), Burgmeier (Erne 88).

Nov 14 - Esbjerg
Denmark 0
South Korea 0
Att: 15,460
Denmark: T Sorensen - Kjaer, Kroldrup, Jacobsen, Jessen, C Poulsen, D Jensen (Absalonsen 70), J Poulsen, Rieks (Gronkjaer 80), Kahlenberg (Enevoldsen 63), Rasmussen (Bernburg 74).
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Cha Du-ri (Oh Beom-seok 83), Cho Yong-hyung, Lee Jung-soo (Kwak Taw-hwi 63), Lee Young-pyo, Lee Chung-yong (Kim Do-heon 85), Kim Jung-woo, Ki Sung-yueng, Park Ji-sung (Yeom Ki-hun 65), Lee Keun-ho (Kim Chi-woo 80), Lee Dong-gook (Seol Ki-hyeon 46).

Nov 14 - Tallinn
Estonia 0
Albania 0
Estonia: Pareiko - Siivo (Enar Jaager 46), Rahn (Klavan 46), Piiroja, Kruglov, Purje (Barengrub 88), Dmitrijev, Vassiljev, Lindpere, Saag (Voskoboinikov 60), Vikonse (Sidorenkov 46).
Albania: Hidi - Daliku (Lila 90), Cana, Curri, Agolli, Duro, Skela, Hyka, Bakaj (Vila 71), Lika (Gjergji 75), Salihi (Kapllani 75).

Nov 14 - Tegucigalpa
Honduras 2 (Costly 40, Welcome 87)
Latvia 1 (Kolesnicenko pen 45)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Honduras: N Valladares - Sabillon, Johnny Palacios, Norales (Bernardez 64), Izaguirre, W Palacios (Jerry Palacios 80), Guevara (Thomas 64), W Martinez (Turcios 46), Nunez, Costly (Welcome 68), D Suazo (Pavon 46).
Latvia: Vanins - Zirnis, Kacanovs, Ivanovs, Astafjevs, Krjukfiks, Rubins, Kolesnicenko (Pereplotkins 89), Rafalskis (Zigajevs 77), Solomicins (Gauna 79), Grebis (Karlsons 62)
Sent off: Zirnis 76min.

Nov 14 - Pescara
Italy 0
Holland 0
Att: 17,134. **Ref:** Circhetta (Swi)
Italy: Buffon - Zambrotta, Cannavaro, Chiellini, Grosso (Criscito 80), Pirlo, Candreva (Montolivo 77), Palombo (Biondini 71), Camoranesi (Marchionni 87), Gilardino (Pazzini 77), Palladino (Rossi 56).
Holland: Stekelenburg - Van der Wiel, Heitinga, Mathijsen, Van Bronckhorst, Kuijt, De Jong, Van Bommel, Van der Vaart (Afellay 76), Elia (Babel 72), Van Persie (Huntelaar 15).

Nov 14 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 1 (Kintziger 75)
Iceland 1 (Johannesson 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 913. **Ref:** Van Boekel (Hol)
Luxembourg: Oberweis - Blaise (Laterza 81), Bukvic, Strasser, Mutsch, Pelaris, Kintziger, Payal (Ferreira 90), Bettmer, Da Mota (Janisch 85), Kitenge (Pupovac 90).
Iceland: Arason - S Jonsson, I Sigurdsson, Steinsson, R Gislason (Johannesson 46), K O Sigurdsson, Hallfredsson, A E Gunnarsson (Danielsson 70), B Gunnarsson, V Gunnarsson, Gudjohnsen.

Nov 14 - Sirumica
Macedonia 3 (Sedloski 48, Pandev pen 61, pen 90)
Canada 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Genov (Bul)
Macedonia: Pacovski (Naumovski 85) - Lazarevski (B Popov 46), G Popov, I Mitreski (Sedloski 46), Noveski (Mojsov 66), Sumulikoski, Despotovski, Georgievski (Alimi 77), Pandev, Stojkov (Savic 59), Naumoski (Ibraimi 46).
Canada: Wagenaar - Klukowski, Hastings, McKenna, Stalteri (Peters 67), Simpson, Bernier, Hutchinson (De Jong 64), De Guzman (Beaulieu-Bourgault 88), Hume (Friend 64), Jackson.

Nov 14 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 0
Serbia 1 (Lazovic 57)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,500. **Ref:** Toussaint (Lux)
Northern Ireland: Taylor (Tuffey 77) - Evans (McCann 46), Hughes, Craigan, McCartney, McGinn (McCourt 72), Davis, Baird, Brunt (O'Connor 65), Feeney (Healy 65), Lafferty (Kirk 72).
Serbia: Isailovic - Rukavina, Vidic (Subotic 46), Lukovic, Kolarov (Vukovic 67), Milijas (Ninkovic 46), Kuzmanovic (Kacar 52), Petrovic, Tosic, Jovanovic (Krasic 46), Lazovic (Lekic 77).

Nov 14 - Warsaw
Poland 0
Romania 1 (D Niculae 59)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Mashiah (Isr)
Poland: Kuszczak - Kowalczyk, Zewlakow (Sadlok 90), Kokoszka, Piotr Brozek, Blaszczykowski (Peszko 60), Obraniak (Guerreiro 80), Dudka, Kosowski (Rybus 75), Jelen, R Lewandowski (Malecki 70).
Romania: Pantilimon - Mattei (Sapunaru 78), Radoi, Chivu, Rat, Roman (Nicolita 46), Codrea (Ghioane 52), Apostol, Tanase (Goian 70), D Niculae, Marica (Bucur 61).

Nov 14 - Khobar
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Shamrani 32)
Belarus 1 (Bordachev 20)
HT: 1-1
Sent off: Zhevnov (Belarus) 23min

Nov 14 - Bratislava
Slovakia 1 (Hamsik pen 26)
United States 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,200. **Ref:** Messner (Aut)
Slovakia: Mucha - Zabavnik, Skrtel, Durica, Cech (Pekarik 90+), Weiss (Kucka 82), Karhan (Kozak 90), Hamsik (Strba 90), Sloch (Sestak 61), Vittek (Svento 68), Jendrisek.
United States: Guzan - Cherundolo, Spector, Bocanegra (Goedson 72), Bornstein, Rogers (Kljestan 82), Feilhaber, Bradley, Dempsey (McCarty 72), Altidore (Cunningham 82), Casey (Johnson 46).

Nov 14 - Port Elizabeth
South Africa 0
Japan 0
Ref: Baltazar (Ang)
South Africa: Josephs - Masilela, Ngcongca, Gould, Mokoena, Sibaya, Dikgacoi (Letsholonyane 69), Tshabalala, Modise (Van Heerden 68), Mphela (Klate 69), McCarthy (Parker 74).
Japan: Kawashima - Nakazawa, Tulio Tanaka, Komano (Konno 80), Uchida (Tokunaga 71), Inamoto (Matsui 58), Endo, Hasebe, Honda (S Nakamura 59), Okazaki, Okubo (Koroki 71).

Nov 14 - Madrid
Spain 2 (Xabi Alonso 16, pen 86)
Argentina 1 (Messi pen 61)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 54,000. **Ref:** Kelly (Ire)
Spain: Casillas (Reina 88) - Sergio Ramos, Puyol (Albiol 46), Pique, Capdevila, Busquets, Xabi Alonso, Xavi (Fabregas 61), Iniesta (Jesus Navas 82), Silva (Negredo 66), Villa (Mata 82).
Argentina: Romero - Coloccini, Demichelis, Heinze, Ansaldi, M Rodriguez (Peretti 84), Mascherano, Gago (Cambiasso 75), Di Maria, Messi (Lavezzi 83), Higuain (Tevez 59).

Nov 14 - Geneva
Switzerland 0
Norway 1 (Carew pen 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Whitby (Wal)
Switzerland: Benaglio - Lichtsteiner (P Degen 46), Bannettler, Senderos (Von Bergen 46), Ziegler, Inler, Schwegler, Huggel (Behrami 62), Barnetta (D Degen 61), Frei (Burgisser 46), Derdiyok (Streller 46).
Norway: Knudsen (Jarstein 46) - Hogli, Hoiland, Hangeland, J A Riise, Huseklepp (Moldskred 40), Skjelbred (Ruud 90), Hauger (Solli 87), Haestad (Tettey 65), Gamst Pedersen, Carew (Braaten 78).

Nov 14 - Cardiff
Wales 3 (Edwards 17, Church 32, Ramsey 35)
Scotland 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 13,844. **Ref:** Zimmermann (Swi)
Wales: Hennessey - Ricketts, Nyatanga (Gabbidon 60), Williams, Morgan, Bale, Ledley (King 80), Ramsey (Allen 57), Edwards (Gotterill 88), C Evans (Earnshaw 46), Church (Vokes 46).
Scotland: Marshall - Hutton, McManus, G Caldwell, Fox (Wallace 55), Dorrans (Robson 71), D Fletcher, Cowie (Riordan 78), K Miller (S Fletcher 55), Naismith (McCormack 62), McFadden (Kyle 62).

Tuesday, November 17
Nov 17 - Sedan, France
Belgium 2 (Witsel 20, Sonck 54)
Qatar 0
HT: 1-0
Belgium: Gillet - De Roover, Van Buyten, Vermaelen, Deschacht, Witsel (Carcela 62), Vertonghen, Feltaini, Mirallas (Geraerts 78), Sonck (De Sutter 78), Hazard (Lamah 68).

Nov 17 - Muscat
Oman 0
Brazil 2 (Nilmar 4, Al Ghalani og 60)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)
Oman: Al Habsi - Rabea, Al Balousbi, Al Nofali, Al Ghalani, A Al Mukhaini (Al Mukhaini), Said, Dorbeen (Al Nuaimi), Al Ajmi, H Al Hossani (Saleh), E Al Hossani (Karim).
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Maicon (Daniel Alves 65), Lucio (Cris 70), Thiago Silva, Michel Bastos, Gilberto Silva, Felipe Melo (Fabio Simplicio 46), Elano (Carlos Eduardo 59), Kaka (Julio Baptista 46), Nilmar, Luis Fabiano (Hulk 46).

Nov 17 - Zilina
Slovakia 1 (Sestak 17)
Chile 2 (Jara 9, Paredes 55)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 11,072. **Ref:** Vad (Hun)
Slovakia: Kamenar - Pekarik, Skrtel, Durica, Petras (Zabavnik 46), Strba (Sapara 75), Kucka (Svento 34), Sestak (Sloch 69), Kozak (Jakubko 46), Hamsik (Vittek 85), Jendrisek.
Chile: Bravo - Vidal, P Contreras, Jara, Coreceda, Millar, Maldonado (Carmona 71), Fierro, Valdivia (Fernandez 15), Tello (Orellana 46), Paredes (Puch 68).

Run at an end...South Korea

SOUTH KOREA

Taegeuk Warriors lose unbeaten record

South Korea failed to equal their Asian record of 28 unbeaten matches when they lost 1-0 to Serbia in a friendly.

Nikola Zigic scored the only goal of the game, which was played in London, but the Taegeuk Warriors' coach Huh Jung-moo said: "I have never mentioned our unbeaten record. It is not important.

"In football, sometimes you win, sometimes you lose."

SPAIN

Euro 2012 draw

Holders Spain will be among the nine seeds when the Euro 2012 qualifying draw is held in Warsaw on February 7. They are joined by Croatia, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Portugal and Russia.

UZBEKISTAN

First Asian Cup qualifiers go through

Uzbekistan joined Syria – who drew 0-0 with Vietnam – in qualifying for the 2011 Asian Cup finals when they beat Malaysia 3-1 with goals from Anvar Gafurov, Bakhodir Nasimov and Timur Kapadze.

Qatar, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and India qualified automatically.

Through...Nasimov (right)

Nov 17 - Bloemfontein
South Africa 0
Jamaica 0
South Africa: Fernandez - Ngcongca (Davids 46), Mokoena, Gould, Thwala, Dikgacoi, Tshabalala (Parker 81), Letsholoniyane, Modise (Van Heerden 69), Mphela, McCarthy (Henyekane 68, Klate 89).
Jamaica: Miller - Thomas, J Taylor, Dicoy Williams (A Reid 80), Campbell-Ryce (Vernan 66), Morrison, Hodges (Cummings 69), Phillips, J Johnson (Boyd 76), Richards (Palmer 84), Austin (Edwards 76).

Wednesday, November 18

Nov 18 - Luanda
Angola 0
Ghana 0
Angola: Carlos - Kikas (Enoque 73), Kali, Hernani (Mabina 28), Andre Macanga (Job 73), Gilberto, Mateus (Manteiras 46), Djalma (Amaro 46), Flavio (Love 87), Dede (Chara 21), Stelvio.
Ghana: Agyei - Paintsil, R Ayew, Addy, Vorsah, Annan, Agyemang, Badu (Sekyere 73), Adiyiah (M Amoah 46), Asamoah, A Ayew (Ansah 90).

Nov 18 - Vienna
Austria 1 (Janitschek 6)
Spain 5 (Fabregas 10, Villa 20, 45, Guiza 56, Pablo Hernandez 57)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 32,000. **Ref:** Meyer (Ger)
Austria: Gratzei - Garics, Dragovic, Scharner, Fuchs, Holzl (Patocka 46), Leitgeb (Baumgartlinger 37), Pehlivan, Jantscher (Kavlak 60), Wallner (Alaba 68), Janko (Hoffer 62). *Sent off: Pehlivan 27min.*
Spain: Casillas (Reina 46) - Sergio Ramos, Albiol, Marchena, Arbeloa, Busquets (Iraola 60), Xavi (Guiza 46), Iniesta (Jesus Navas 46), Fabregas, Villa (Negredo 46), Silva (Pablo Hernandez 46).

Nov 18 - Aarhus
Denmark 3 (Absalonsen 47, Rieks 52, Bernburg 55)
United States 1 (Cunningham 26)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,172. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Denmark: T Sorensen - Jacobsen, Kjaer, Kroldrup, Lumb, D Jensen (Absalonsen 46), C Poulsen (Kvist 46), J Poulsen, Martin Jorgensen (Bech 80), Rasmussen (Bernburg 35; Enevoldsen 90), Gronkjaer (Rieks 46).
United States: Guzan - Hejduk, Spector (Conrad 70), Bocanegra (Goodson 70), Bornstein, Holden (Rogers 61), Clark, Bradley (Castillo 61), Feilhaber, Altidore (McCarty 80), Cunningham (Johnson 61).

Nov 18 - Gelsenkirchen
Germany 2 (Podolski pen 11, 90)
Ivory Coast 2 (Eboue 57, Doumbia 85)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 33,015. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Germany: Wiese (Neuer 46) - Boateng (Beck 65), Mertesacker, Westermann, Lahm, Hitzlsperger, Schweinsteiger (Hanel 80), Trochowski (Schafer 86), Ozil, Klessling (Gomez 70), Podolski.
Ivory Coast: Zogbo - Demel (Keita 72), K Toure, Bamba, Boka, Tiote (Angoua 87), Zokora (E Kone 48), Y Toure (Meite 90+), Eboue, Kalou (Doumbia 83), Cisse (Kouassi 66).

Nov 18 - Heerenveen
Holland 0
Paraguay 0
Att: 25,000. **Ref:** Hrinak (Slk)
Holland: Stekelenburg - Van der Wiel, Heitinga, Mathijsen, Van Bronckhorst (Braafheid 46), Afellay, De Jong (Engelaar 46), Van Bommel (Brama 70), Van der Vaart (Bakkal 85), Elia (Babel 46), Kuijt (Huntelaar 62).
Paraguay: Villar - Veron, Alcaraz, Da Silva, Morel, Ledesma (Santa Cruz 48), Ortigoza (Bonet 70), V Caceres, Riveros, O Cardozo (Achucarro 65), Haedo Valdez (Lopez 81).

Nov 18 - Miami Gardens, USA
Honduras 1 (D Suazo 47)
Peru 2 (Izaguirre og 40, Rengifo 63)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Jurisevic (USA)
Honduras: N Valladares - Sabillon, Bernardez, Norales, Izaguirre, Thomas (Nunez 44), W Palacios, W Martinez (M Valladares 61), Turcios (Jerry Palacios 80), Pavon (Welcome 76), D Suazo (Costly 70).
Peru: Fernandez (Butron 46) - Contreras, Galliquio, Ramos, Valverde (Corzo 46), Ballon, R Torres (La Rosa 80), Ismodes (Peixoto 89), Palacios, Fano (Sanchez 67), Rengifo (Avila 80).

Nov 18 - Tehran
Iran 1 (Teymourian 36)
Macedonia 1 (Pandev 49)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Moradi (Irn)
Iran: Mehdi Rahmati - Beigzadeh, Nosrati, Aghili, Kaebi, Teymourian, Nekounam (Khalatbary 46), Kazemian (Mobali 46), Madanchi (Heydari 57), Shojaei (Ansarifard 76), Meydavoudi (Borhani 67).
Macedonia: Pacovski - Noveski, Georgevski (Mojsov 79), Sedloski, G Popov (Ibraimi 46), Despotovski (Alimi 71), Savic (Lazarevski 46), R Popov, Sumulikoski, Ivanovski (Stojkov 46), Pandev (Gligorov 86).

Nov 18 - Cesena
Italy 1 (Chiellini 29)
Sweden 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,260. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Italy: Marchetti - Maggio (Cassani 46), Legrottaglie, Chiellini, Criscito (Bocchetti 55), Candreva (Rossi 46), Montolivo (Palombo 68), Biondini (Galloppa 46), Marchionni (Camoranesi 77), Pazzini, Di Natale.
Sweden: Isaksson - Lustig (Wernbloom 72), Mellberg, Majstorovic, Dorsin (Wendt 58), V Elm (R Elm 46), A Svensson, S Larsson, Elmander (Rosenberg 78), Safari (Djuric 58), Hysen (Toivonen 72).

Nov 18 - Paola
Malta 1 (M Mifsud 46)
Bulgaria 4 (Bozhinov 5, Berbatov 76, 93, Georgiev 81)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Nijhuis (Hol)
Malta: Hogg - Failla (S Bajada 46), Said, A Agius, R Fenech (P Fenech 62), Briffa, Bezzina, Sammut (Herrera 55), Pace (Mallia 81), M Mifsud, Bogdanovic (G Agius 71).
Bulgaria: Mihaylov - Minev, Angelov, Georgiev (I Ivanov 86), Yankov, Manolev (Ivan Stoyanov 64), Sarmov, Milanov, S Petrov (Bandalovski 46), Bozhinov (Domovchiyski 46), Berbatov (Rangelov 88).

Nov 18 - Podgorica
Montenegro 1 (Vucinic 80)
Belarus 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Stavrev (Mac)
Montenegro: Bozovic (Blazic 46) - Pavicevic, Jovanovic, Batak (Pejovic 46), Drzdovic (N Vukcevic 90), Zverotic (Kascelan 86), Pekovic (Vukovic 78), Drincic, Boskovic (Djalovic 46), S Vukcevic (Gluscevic 90), Vucinic (Fatic 84).
Belarus: Zhevnov - Shitov, Lentsevich, Martinovic (Verkhovtsov 46), Yurevich, Kalachev (Scernosky 79), Omelyanchuk, Kisljak, Berdachev (Krivets 90), Radionov (Hleb 46), Kornilenko (Kovel 87).
Sent off: Verkhovtsov 88min.

Nov 18 - Bydgoszcz
Poland 1 (Rybus 19)
Canada 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,400. **Ref:** Christoffersen (Den)
Poland: Kuszczak (Szczesny 46) - Rzemniczak (Kowalczyk 65), Zewlakow, Sadlok, S Gancarczyk, Peszko, Dudka, Obraniak (Malecki 88), Kosowski (J Gancarczyk 69), Rybus (Majewski 77), Lewandowski.
Canada: Hirschfeld - Klukowski, Stalteri, McKenna, Jakovic, Hutchinson, De Jong (Simpson 70), De Guzman, Peters, Friend (Jackson 64), Radzinski (Hume 84).

Nov 18 - London
Serbia 1 (Zigic 7)
South Korea 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,117. **Ref:** Attwell (Eng)
Serbia: Stojkovic - Vidic (Kolarov 72), Ivanovic, Milijas (Kacar 58), Lukovic (Vukovic 88), Jovanovic (Ninkovic 88), Krasic, Subotic, Kuzmanovic (Petrovic 82), Lazovic (Z Tosic 46), Zigic.
South Korea: Kim Young-kwang - Oh Beom-seok (Cha Du-ri 46), Lee Jung-soo, Cho Yong-hyung, Lee Young-pyo, Kim Nam-il, Cho Won-hee (Kim Do-heon 35; Kim Hyung-il 81), Lee Chung-yong, Park Ji-sung (Kang Min-soo 68), Yeom Ki-hun (Lee Keun-ho 46), Seol Ki-hyeon (Lee Dong-gook 80).

Saturday, November 21

Nov 21 - Lusaka
Zambia 4 (Chamanga 10, 13, 70, F Sunzu 90)
North Korea 1 (Mun In-guk pen 86)
HT: 2-0

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP

In Nigeria

Group A
Oct 24: Honduras 0 Argentina 1; Nigeria 3 Germany 3.
Oct 27: Argentina 2 Germany 1; Nigeria 1 Honduras 0.
Oct 30: Germany 3 Honduras 1; Argentina 1 Nigeria 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	3	2	1	0	6	4	7
Argentina	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Germany	3	1	1	1	7	8	4
Honduras	3	0	0	3	1	5	0

Group B
Oct 24: Mexico 0 Switzerland 2; Brazil 3 Japan 2.
Oct 27: Switzerland 4 Japan 3; Brazil 0 Mexico 1.
Oct 30: Japan 0 Mexico 2; Switzerland 1 Brazil 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	3	3	0	0	7	3	9
Mexico	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Brazil	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Japan	3	0	0	3	5	8	0

Group C
Oct 25: Iran 2 Gambia 0; Colombia 2 Holland 1.
Oct 28: Holland 2 Gambia 1; Iran 0 Colombia 0.
Oct 31: Gambia 2 Colombia 2; Holland 0 Iran 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Colombia	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Holland	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Gambia	3	0	1	2	3	6	1

Group D
Oct 25: Turkey 1 Burkina Faso 0; Costa Rica 1 New Zealand 1.
Oct 28: New Zealand 1 Burkina Faso 1.
Oct 29: Turkey 4 Costa Rica 1.
Oct 31: Burkina Faso 4 Costa Rica 1; New Zealand 1 Turkey 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkey	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Burkina Faso	3	1	1	1	5	3	4
New Zealand	3	0	3	0	3	3	3
Costa Rica	3	0	1	2	3	9	1

Group E
Oct 26: United Arab Emirates 2 Malawi 0; Spain 2 United States 1.
Oct 28: United States 1 Malawi 0; United Arab Emirates 1 Spain 3.
Nov 1: Malawi 1 Spain 4; United States 1 United Arab Emirates 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	3	3	0	0	8	3	9
United States	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
UAE	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Malawi	3	0	0	3	1	7	0

Group F
Oct 26: Uruguay 1 South Korea 3; Algeria 0 Italy 1.
Oct 29: Italy 2 South Korea 1; Uruguay 2 Algeria 0.
Nov 1: South Korea 2 Algeria 0; Italy 0 Uruguay 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	3	2	1	0	3	1	7
South Korea	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
Uruguay	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Algeria	3	0	0	3	0	5	0

Top two in each group, plus the four third-placed countries with the best record, qualified for the last 16

Last 16
Nov 4: Argentina 2 Colombia 3; Italy 2 United States 1; Switzerland 4 Germany 3 (aet); Turkey 2 United Arab Emirates 0.
Nov 5: Mexico 1 South Korea 1 (aet; South Korea 5-3 on pens); Spain 4 Burkina Faso 1; Iran 1 Uruguay 2 (aet), Nigeria 5 New Zealand 0.

Quarter-finals
Nov 8: Colombia 1 Turkey 1 (aet: Colombia 5-3 on pens); Switzerland 2 Italy 1.
Nov 9: Spain 3 Uruguay 3 (aet; Spain 4-2 on pens); South Korea 1 Nigeria 3.

Semi-finals
Nov 12: Colombia 0 Switzerland 4; Spain 1 Nigeria 3.

Third-place play-off
Nov 15: Colombia 0 Spain 1.

Final
Nov 15 - Abuja
Switzerland 1 (Seferovic 63)
Nigeria 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
Switzerland: Siegrist - Kamber, Chappuis, Veseli (Hajrovic 78), Buff, Seferovic, Ben Khalifa, Xhaka (Nimeley 60), Rodriguez, Martignoni (Gonzalves 67), Kasami.
Nigeria: Paul - Obina, Aliyu, Chukwudi, Omeruo, S Okoro, Ajagun, Emeh, Emmanuel (Otubanjo 78), Egbadi (Kayode 70), Ameer.

USA Real Salt Lake spoil Beckham story

THE FAIRY-TALE ending to the MLS season would, I suppose, have seen the grand resurgence of Los Angeles Galaxy, with the redoubtable David Beckham leading them to the title.

But fairy tales don't always have happy endings – and there was none for Beckham and Galaxy as underdogs Real Salt Lake stole their thunder by winning 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the MLS Cup Final in Seattle.

Galaxy's progress to the Final had not been particularly glittering. The football they played was decidedly ordinary, even though this was a team containing MLS' two superstars: Beckham and Landon Donovan.

Galaxy struggled to get past Chivas USA in the play-offs, winning 3-2 on aggregate, and then won a tedious semi-final 2-0 against Houston Dynamo with another pedestrian display.

But this was somehow predictable. New coach Bruce Arena had looked at last term's Galaxy team – who didn't even get into the play-offs – and seen that they scored a lot of goals (a league-leading 55 in 30 games) but was more concerned at the 62 they conceded. So defence became a priority and their game duly suffered. A season record of 12 wins, 12 draws and six defeats was good enough to top the Western Conference and make the play-offs. But while Galaxy were labouring their way to the Final, over in the Eastern Conference surprising things were happening.

Real Salt Lake, the last team to qualify for the play-offs, and the team with the worst record – they had 11 wins, seven draws and 12 defeats – were making mincemeat of the form book and the opposition.

Columbus, the reigning champions, and with the best regular-season record, were sent packing on home turf as RSL won 3-2. A shoot-out win over Chicago Fire after a 0-0 draw followed and, against all the odds and predictions, RSL were on their way to Seattle, where much-favoured Galaxy awaited.

Even so, things were not going well for Galaxy as Beckham was reported to be nursing an ankle injury and would have to play in pain or with cortisone injections – or both.

The Seattle fans – who had set MLS attendance records throughout the season with an average crowd of more than 30,000 – outdid themselves as 46,011 turned out for the MLS gala occasion.

Beckham was duly featured in television close-ups, grimacing and wincing, but his first meaningful action was a spiteful first-half challenge on RSL's Javier Morales. After a couple of minutes of hobbling about, Morales was forced off, leaving RSL without their key playmaker.

Twenty minutes later, Galaxy took the lead with a goal from Mike Magee following an exchange of passes between Donovan and Beckham.

The fear now was that Galaxy would turn on its vaunted defence and grind out another 1-0 win – they had pulled off seven of those during the season. But that didn't happen, mostly because RSL refused to allow it.

You've been dumped...Beckham comes off second best in a challenge in the Final

The second half belonged to RSL, who played exuberantly as Galaxy faded and equalised deservedly after 63 minutes when Robbie Findley slammed home a loose ball. Extra time could not separate the sides and penalties were needed for only the second time in 19 MLS Finals.

A haggard-looking Beckham took the first kick and scored, but after 12 more kicks – one of which was blasted way over the bar by Donovan – RSL full-back Robbie Russell sealed it.

RSL's goalkeeper Nick Rimando was named man of the match for his two shoot-out saves, but the award should surely have gone to captain Kyle Beckerman, who had led by example throughout the 120 minutes.

Paul Gardner

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
LANDON DONOVAN
(Los Angeles Galaxy)
Helped Galaxy to their first MLS Cup Final appearance since 2005, not to mention being part of the national side that reached the Final of the Confederations Cup and qualified for the 2010 World Cup finals.

COACH OF THE SEASON
JASON KREIS (Real Salt Lake)
The MLS gave Galaxy's Bruce Arena its coach of the year award, but a more deserving recipient would have been American youngster Kreis who, in only his second year as full-time coach, took RSL from perennial no-hopers to MLS champions.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
OMAR GONZALEZ
(Los Angeles Galaxy)
Formed a steady centre-back pairing with Gregg Berhalter and started all 30 games for a Galaxy defence that went from being the worst in the MLS to one of the best.

Champion feeling...RSL captain Beckerman hoists the MLS Cup

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Columbus	30	13	10	7	41	31	49
Chicago	30	11	12	7	39	34	45
New England	30	11	9	10	33	37	42
DC United	30	9	13	8	43	44	40
Toronto	30	10	9	11	37	46	39
Kansas City	30	8	9	13	33	42	33
New York	30	5	6	19	27	47	21

WESTERN CONFERENCE - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Los Angeles	30	12	12	6	36	31	48
Houston	30	13	9	8	39	29	48
Seattle	30	12	11	7	38	29	47
Chivas	30	13	6	11	34	31	45
Salt Lake	30	11	7	12	43	35	40
Colorado	30	10	10	10	42	38	40
Dallas	30	11	6	13	50	47	39
San Jose	30	7	9	14	36	50	30

Quarter-finals

Chivas v Los Angeles
2-2, 0-1 (agg 2-3)
New England v Chicago
2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3)
Salt Lake v Columbus
1-0, 3-2 (agg 4-2)
Seattle v Houston
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)

Semi-finals

Los Angeles 2 Houston 0 (aet)
Chicago 0 Salt Lake 0 (aet; Salt Lake 5-4 on pens)

Final (MLS Cup)

Los Angeles 1 Salt Lake 1
(aet; Salt Lake 5-4 on pens)

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Here we go again...Bohemians celebrate retaining the league crown

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Bohs win their 11th title

DESPITE SEEING their hopes of a move away from Dalymount Park to a proposed new stadium near Dublin Airport plummet this year due to the collapse of the property market in Ireland, Bohemians – one of the League of Ireland's founding members back in 1921 – retained their championship crown for the first time in their 119-year history.

Bohs manager Pat Fenlon has now won the championship five times, but he was quick to praise his squad, saying: "It's all about the players. To win the league two years in a row is very special. It has been a very difficult season for the club, but you always get what you deserve in football."

The Gypsies also won the League Cup, beating Waterford United 3-1 in the Final, and there was an added reward for goalkeeper Brian Murphy, who became the first League of Ireland player to be included in Giovanni Trapattoni's Republic of Ireland squad when he was called up for the World Cup play-off against France. Murphy is now set to join English Championship side Ipswich Town.

Overall it was an exciting season, but events off the field were all too often a distraction, with a bombshell right at the end of the campaign.

Derry City, who had finished fourth, were expelled by the FAI for using two different contracts for their players to cheat league regulations regarding limits on wages.

After initial speculation that Derry, who are located north of the border, might return to the Northern Ireland league where they played until 1972, it now looks likely that they will join the League of Ireland First Division.

Cork City also had financial problems during the season and at one stage had difficulty paying their players – and even their bus driver – before managing to clear their debts.

After a nomadic existence for over 20 years, Shamrock Rovers finally moved into their new stadium in Tallaght, which was opened with a friendly against Real Madrid in what was Cristiano Ronaldo's first game for his new club. Under Michael O'Neill, the Hoops kept the pressure on Bohs in the league until the penultimate game of the campaign, when their failure to beat Galway United at home handed the title to the Gypsies.

St Patrick's Athletic, who were very weak this term after the loss of several experienced players, pulled off unlikely wins against Valletta of Malta and Krylia Sovetov of Russia in the Europa League, before going out to Steaua Bucharest. However, the Saints were poor in the league and manager Jeff Kenna quit in September. Former UCD boss Pete Mahon managed to keep Saints in the top flight, though Richard Sadlier, the ex-Millwall and Republic of Ireland striker, quit as CEO of the club at the end of the season.

Dundalk manager Sean Connor, whose side received 19 red cards, also quit at the end of the season.

University College Dublin claimed automatic promotion after winning the First Division, and they will be joined in the top flight next season by Sporting Fingal from north Dublin. Formed in 2007, Fingal finished third in the second tier, but beat runners-up Shelbourne and the Premier Division's bottom side, Bray Wanderers, to win the play-off in what was only their second season in the league.

Managed by former Shamrock Rovers star Liam Buckley, Fingal also won the FAI Cup, beating Sligo Rovers 2-1 in the Final.

Kildare County dropped out of the First Division to be replaced by Salthill Devon, meaning that – along with Galway United in the Premier Division and Mervue United in the second tier – there will be, for the first time, three Galway teams in the league next term.

Sean Creedon

PREMIER DIVISION - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bohemians	36	24	5	7	62	21	77
Shamrock Rov	36	21	10	5	51	27	73
Cork City	36	17	9	10	42	28	60
Dundalk	36	12	8	16	46	51	44
Sligo Rovers	36	11	10	15	41	51	43
St Patrick's Ath	36	13	4	19	29	46	43
Galway United	36	12	6	18	36	57	42
Drogheda Utd	36	7	11	18	32	50	32
Bray Wdrs	36	6	10	20	30	56	28
Derry City	36	18	5	13	49	31	0*

*Derry City were deducted 59 points

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
BRIAN SHELLEY (Bohemians)
After winning the league in 2001 – before following Bohs boss Roddy Collins to Carlisle United in England – the 28 year-old defender, who also won the title with Drogheda United two years ago, returned to Dalymount Park in January to collect a third championship medal.

COACH OF THE SEASON
PAT FENLON (Bohemians)
Following a successful playing career, Fenlon won three titles as manager of Shelbourne. He then had a brief spell with Derry City before returning to Dublin and leading Bohs to successive crowns.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
GARY TWIGG (Shamrock Rovers)
Followed his manager Michael O'Neill from Brechin City in Scotland to Rovers at the beginning of the year and ended up the Premier Division's leading scorer with 24 goals.

Fifth title...Fenlon

RUSSIA Rubin dazzle again

RUBIN KAZAN made Russian football history by becoming the first non-Moscow club to win back-to-back league titles.

Rubin – whose name means "ruby" in Russian – hit top spot after 10 games and stayed there for the rest of the season. Yet, strangely, skipper Sergei Semak was the club's only player selected by national team coach Guus Hiddink – even after they had won their Champions League game in Barcelona. Many critics cited the Dutchman's conservative player-selection policy as one of the reasons for Russia's defeat by Slovenia in the World Cup play-offs.

Besides local talent such as goalkeeper Sergei Ryzhikov, winger Aleksandr Ryazantsev and striker Aleksandr Bukharov, Rubin have made good use of their foreign signings: Argentinian playmaker Alejandro Dominguez, his fellow countryman and wing-back Cristian Ansaldi, and former Turkey midfielder Gokdeniz Karadeniz.

Kurban Berdyev's nine years as Kazan coach are all the more remarkable considering the team's poor form in the middle of the decade. Now 57, he wanted to resign at one stage but the club talked him out of it.

That was not the case, however, at most Premier League clubs this past season. The 16 teams get through 28 managers in 2009, with CSKA Moscow being the most trigger-happy. Having started the campaign in March with ex-Brazil star Zico in charge, the army team replaced him with Juande Ramos six months later. The Spaniard had hardly learned his players' names before he was fired and Leonid Slutski, who left Samara's Kryliya Sovetov in mid-season, took over to lead CSKA to fifth – their first finish outside the top three for eight years.

Call me No1...Akinfeev

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
IGOR AKINFEEV (CSKA Moscow)
The national team goalkeeper recovered after last season's serious injury and was probably the only Russia player exempt from criticism for the failure to qualify for the World Cup finals.

COACH OF THE SEASON
KURBAN BERDYEV (Rubin Kazan)
Proved his 2008 triumph was no fluke. Capable of changing the rhythm of a game with tactical changes, he also found the right balance between foreign and local players as well as between youth and experience.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
ALEX (Spartak Moscow)
The Brazilian joined Spartak at the start of the season and instantly earned recognition for his technical skills and passing ability.

A good Champions League show in Manchester and a November win over arch-rivals Spartak was no consolation for the majority of CSKA fans. The loss of national team winger Yuri Zhirkov to Chelsea and the league's best striker Vagner Love, who returned to Palmeiras in Brazil on loan, deprived the team of its speed and goalscoring potential.

Spartak Moscow underwent major changes during the season. Valery Karpin, the club's general director, fired coach Michael Laudrup in April just four games into the new term. Former Russia midfielder Karpin, 40, then took up the post himself, despite a lack of coaching experience and no professional licence, and steered the side to a second-place finish – a major surprise, considering their poor start.

For the nine-time Russian champions it was their fourth runners-up spot in five years and they intend to go one better next term. Spartak's hopes will depend on Brazilian imports Alex and Welliton, probably the best attacking duo of the season. The speedy Welliton was the league's top scorer with 21 goals, while 27-year-old Alex produced a number of terrific assists, earning him a national team call-up.

Zenit St Petersburg's third place was a step back for the 2008 UEFA Cup and Supercup winners, who were champions in 2007. Although the country's richest club, thanks to their sponsorship by Gazprom, Zenit had to cope with the loss of three top players who chose to move abroad: Anatoliy Tymoshchuk (Bayern Munich), Pavel Pogrebnyak (Stuttgart) and Andrei Arshavin (Arsenal). Portuguese playmaker Danny also missed most of the season through injury.

Just like Spartak Moscow, a couple of poor results in the final phase of the season ended Zenit's hopes of overthrowing Rubin.

Dick Advocaat, the most successful coach in St Petersburg's history, departed to take charge of Belgium's national side. He left Russia in tears, cheered by thousands of fans at the airport. The new man at the Zenit helm is former captain Anatoli Davydov.

Lokomotiv Moscow were back on track after their former coach Yuri Semin returned from Dynamo Kyiv in the middle of the season, while FC Moscow, growing under the wise guidance of Montenegrin manager Miodrag Bozovic, were another success story.

Dynamo Moscow finished a disappointing eighth but suffered from a lack of quality in depth. New financing has been promised by the owners for next season, which may open up new horizons.

FC Khimki from the region of the same name outside Moscow, produced the poorest show in the Premier League history by winning just twice in 30 games. They finished with 10 points and were relegated, along with Kuban Krasnodar. The two vacant places will be taken by returnees Anzhi Makhachkala and newcomers Sibir Novosibirsk.

Victor Gusev

Big squeeze...CSKA's Alan Dzagoev finds no way through against Rubin

PREMIER LEAGUE - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rubin Kazan	30	19	6	5	62	21	63
Spartak Moscow	30	17	4	9	61	33	55
Zenit	30	15	9	6	48	27	54
Lokomotiv	30	15	9	6	43	30	54
CSKA Moscow	30	16	4	10	48	30	52
FC Moscow	30	13	9	8	39	28	48
Saturn	30	13	6	11	38	41	45
Dynamo	30	12	6	12	31	37	42
Tom Tomsk	30	11	8	11	31	39	41
Kryliya Sovetov	30	10	6	14	32	42	36
Spartak Nalchik	30	8	11	11	36	33	35
Terek Grozny	30	9	6	15	33	48	33
Amkar Perm	30	8	9	13	27	37	33
FC Rostov	30	7	11	12	28	39	32
Kuban	30	6	10	14	23	51	28
FC Khimki	30	2	4	24	20	64	10

PEOPLE in the news

Endo takes top Asia award

Asia's best...Endo

ASIA/OCEANIA

Gamba Osaka and Japan midfielder YASUHITO ENDO was voted Asian player of the year for 2009. Bahrain defender SAYED MOHAMED, who plays for Al Khor in Qatar, was runner-up, with Kawasaki Frontale and Japan midfielder KENGO NAKAMURA in third place. The Asian Football Confederation award is only open to players who are based in Asia.

Tragic...Saad

SALEM SAAD of UAE club Al Nasr collapsed and died after suffering a heart attack during a routine training session with his club. The 31-year-old striker had captained Al Shabab to the UAE league title in 2008. His father, Saad Albadla, also collapsed and died on the pitch while playing for Shabab in his 40s.

Former international player SHAHIDUR RAHMAN replaced Brazilian coach DIDO in charge of Bangladesh's national team.

New start...Thompson

Newcastle Jets captain MATT THOMPSON – who has played more A-League matches than any other player – has agreed to join new franchise Melbourne Heart when they enter the A-League next season.

Former Manchester United midfielder JESPER OLSEN and ex-Australia international ANTE MILICIC have joined Melbourne Heart as assistants to head coach JOHN VAN 'T SCHIP ahead of the club's debut campaign in the 2010-11 A-League season.

EUROPE

Russia's sports minister VITALI MUTKO resigned as president of the Russian Football Union after he was ordered to give up or leave one of his positions by the country's president Dmitri Medvedev. The new RFU leader will be elected in February 2010.

AVRAM GRANT, the Israeli coach who led Chelsea in the 2008 Champions League Final, took over from PAUL HART at struggling Premier League side Portsmouth. The 54-year-old returned to the club as director of football in October.

Sporting Lisbon coach PAULO BENTO resigned after his team's 1-1 home draw against Ventspils of Latvia in the Europa League and a poor run of form that saw last year's Portuguese Liga runners-up slide to seventh place. CARLOS CARVALHAL, who was sacked by Maritimo in September after seven months at the helm, has replaced him.

Palermo's man...Rossi

DELIO ROSSI took over from former Italy and Internazionale goalkeeper WALTER ZENGA as coach of Palermo following their 1-1 draw at home to the 49-year-old Zenga's former club, Catania, in the Sicilian derby. Rossi guided Lazio to the Italian Cup last season.

After winning just three times during his 14 games in charge, GEORGE BURLEY was sacked as manager of Scotland, along with his assistants TERRY

Paying the price...Bento

BUTCHER and PAUL HEGARTY.

Serie A strugglers Siena appointed ALBERTO MALESANI as coach for the remainder of the season. The 55-year-old became the Italian club's third coach of the campaign after replacing MARCO BARONI, who took over following the sacking of MARCO GIAMPAOLO.

Former Internazionale defender ANDREA MANDORLINI replaced Portuguese coach ANTONIO CONCEICAO as boss of reigning Romanian champions CFR Cluj.

Party time...Novakovic

Koln striker MILIVOJE NOVAKOVIC was stripped of the club captaincy for his perceived poor attitude. He was reported to have been reluctant to return to Germany after an international, preferring to attend a party organised in celebration of Slovenia's qualification for the World Cup. This was despite his club arranging for a private jet to fly him home.

DARREN FERGUSON, the son of Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson, left his role as manager of Peterborough United. The 37-year-old led the club to successive promotions – going from the English fourth tier to the Championship – after taking charge in 2007.

Mexican striker ANTONIO DE NIGRIS, who played for Greek first division club Larissa, died of a suspected heart attack. The 31-year-old, who made 16 appearances and scored 4 goals for Mexico, joined Larissa in the summer from Turkish club Ankaragucu.

Sad loss...De Nigris

MIGUEL ANGEL PORTUGAL replaced JUAN CARLOS MANDIA as coach of Racing Santander. The 53-year-old Portuguese led the Spanish side to 10th place in La Liga in 2007 before leaving to take up a position as technical secretary with Real Madrid – a post that he held until June last year.

VLADIMIR SMICER was appointed Czech Republic team manager the day after he announced his retirement as a player. The 36-year-old former Liverpool and Slavia Prague midfielder, who won 81 caps and scored 27 goals for his country, was forced to call time on his playing career due to recurrent cartilage problems.

In charge...Hassan

Russian Premier League referee ALMIR KAYUMOV is recovering in a psychiatric hospital in Moscow after being talked out of a suicide attempt. The 44-year-old was reported to be set to jump from the window of his flat but was rescued by emergency workers.

Former Manchester City and East Germany striker UWE ROSLER left his post as coach of Norwegian club Viking by mutual consent. He has been replaced by former Norway coach AGE HAREIDE, who also played in England for Man City.

AMERICAS

Former international ROBERTO CARLOS has returned to Brazil after signing a two-year deal with Corinthians. The 36-year-old left-back, whose contract with Fenerbahce expired in December, will link up once again with Ronaldo.

Having led Huracan to a surprise second place in the Argentinian closing championship in July, ANGEL CAPPA resigned as coach following his side's disappointing 2009-10 opening championship.

PAUL DALGLISH, the son of former Liverpool and Scotland legend Kenny Dalglish, was named coach of Tampa Bay Rowdies, who are set to join the USL First Division – the second tier of football in the US.

Former Mexico coach RICARDO LAVOLPE left Atlas by mutual agreement after 11 months in charge of the Mexican club. The 57-year-old former goalkeeper was a member of Argentina's 1978 World Cup-winning squad.

Former Switzerland coach ENZO TROSSERO left Saudi Arabian club Al Shabab to return to his Argentinian homeland and take charge of Godoy Cruz.

Former Everton and USA midfielder PREDRAG "PREKI" RADOSAVLJEVIC has replaced CHRIS CUMMINS as coach of Toronto.

DENIS HAMLETT was fired as coach of Chicago Fire despite having guided the club to the MLS Eastern Conference finals in each of his two seasons in charge.

AFRICA

HOSSAM HASSAN, Egypt's most-capped player of all time with 169 appearances for the Pharaohs, took over as coach of Zamalek after the dismissal of former France boss HENRI MICHEL. During his career, Hassan played for Zamalek and their great rivals Al Ahly, and has previously been coach and general manager of Al Masry.

Rwanda coach BRANKO TUCAK was sacked after a series of defeats resulted in their failure to qualify for the 2010 African Nations Cup finals. The 57-year-old Croat was replaced on an interim basis by ERIC NHSIMIYIMANA for the duration of the East and Central Africa Senior Challenge Cup in Kenya.

In the hot seat...Preki

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP GROUP A

ALGERIA

Decision time

Are they finally back to their very best – or did they just get lucky in qualifying?

European recruit...Meghni

AFTER MISSING out on the last two African Nations Cup finals, and plummeting down the world rankings, Algeria stormed back to qualify for the World Cup in dramatic circumstances, with their brutal tussle for group supremacy with Egypt drawing headlines across the world.

However, the question of whether *Les Fennecs* (the Desert Foxes) are back among Africa's top footballing powers – or just enjoying a fortunate streak – should be answered in Angola.

Coach Rabah Saadane says this is a massive chance to become even more competitive leading up to South Africa 2010. Of the six African countries at the World Cup finals, Algeria have arguably the least chance of making any real impression. But they do have a good base to work from as changes to FIFA statutes last May have allowed even more players to sign up to the Algerian cause – most notably Mourad Meghni of Lazio and Portsmouth's Hassan Yebda.

The side is now drawn almost exclusively from European-based players, despite the fact goalkeeper Lounes Gaouaoui of ASO Clef was their most influential player in the qualifying competition.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
RABAH SAADANE
Now in his fifth stint with the national team, was coach in 1986 when Algeria were last at the World Cup finals.

KEY PLAYER
KARIM ZIANI
Aggressive, inspirational midfielder and fearless tackler.

NOT TO BE UNDERESTIMATED

Strength and power are the key, with the likes of Madjid Bougherra and Ziani bringing an aggressive touch to Saadane's game plan. However, that does not mean the team is without subtlety and they should not be underestimated.

ANGOLA

Great expectations

The hosts are under intense pressure to satisfy the dreams and desires of an expectant nation

Hoping...Ze Kalanga and Mateus (no14)

THE HOSTS carry a massive burden of expectation. Having qualified for the World Cup finals in Germany four years ago against the odds, there are heightened hopes for *Los Palancas Negras* (the Black Antelopes), with unrealistic pressure being ratcheted up at home, from politicians and pop stars to the people in the street.

Portuguese coach Manuel Jose took over last June to become the third man in charge in seven months. Luis Oliveira Goncalves departed after Angola failed in the early stages of the 2010 World Cup qualifiers and his successor, Mabi De Almeida, did not last long as they lost a series of low-key friendlies.

Jose, in contrast, has not lost any of his first eight games as boss, though they have admittedly been mostly uneventful warm-up games, played before a few hundred at training camps in Portugal.

Jose has worked swiftly to bring some discipline and inject fresh talent into a squad that had made few changes from the 2006 line-up.

Manucho's indiscipline cost the Valladolid striker Jose's confidence, though the player has apologised and a possible return is suggested. However, even if he is forgiven, the former Manchester United player is unlikely to make the starting line-up.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
MANUEL JOSE
A legend in Egypt, where he won the African Champions League four times with Al Ahly – the club he left last year to take the Angola job. Has also been in charge of Sporting Lisbon and Benfica in his homeland.

KEY PLAYER
FLAVIO
Aggressive and sharp in the box, also has incredible strength in the air for such a squat player.

COACH WILL LOOK TO FORMER CLUB CHARGES

Jose will rely on left winger Gilberto and striker Flavio – who both played under him in Cairo at Al Ahly – to provide inspiration. Gilberto missed out on the 2006 World Cup because of injury, but it is his ability to counter-attack quickly, together with the finishing prowess of Flavio, that will be the core of the hosts' attacking plans.

MALAWI

Learning curve

It's only the Flames' second-ever appearance in the finals and it will be good experience

Big chance...Chiukepo Msowoya (left)

USING THE World Cup qualifiers to also determine the field for the African Nations Cup meant Malawi have been able to qualify on the back of a single win and just one draw in their last six matches.

The Flames only continue to flicker because Guinea crumbled in the final months of the campaign, with the burden of political strife at home, and two coaching changes, impacting heavily on the side.

However, all credit must go to the Malawians for taking their chance. Crucial to qualification was beating Guinea at home, then holding the mighty Ivory Coast when they came to Blantyre in October.

This is only the second time Malawi have qualified for the finals, their last appearance coming in 1984. They are likely only to be making up the numbers, but the experience of qualifying is a major fillip for football in the country and a good showcase for several talented youngsters.

The fear must be, however, that they will be severely outplayed in a tournament where the rest of the field are on a different level in terms of talent and experience.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
KINNAH PHIRI

Iconic figure in Malawi football who returned home to take charge of the national team after a spell coaching in South Africa's Premier League.

KEY PLAYER
RUSSEL MWAFULIRWA
Old-fashioned centre-forward who will pose a big problem for opposing defences. Plays in Sweden for Norrkoping.

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Will leave little to subtlety. Malawi are a side that continually surge forward, often overwhelming opponents but then being let down by their own lack of acumen at crucial times. Defensive discipline is sometimes wayward but there is never a dull moment watching them play.

MALI

Welcome back

The Eagles look all set to soar now that their big-name stars have returned

Know-how...Kanoute

MALI WERE expected to be Africa's outside bet for a World Cup place, but once drawn in a final-round group with Ghana they seemed to be overcome by stage fright and their campaign ended soon after it had begun. But even though a home defeat by the Black Stars in June effectively ended their South African hopes, their progress to Angola was never in any doubt.

While injuries can be blamed for defeats at crucial junctures in qualifying, *Les Aigles* (the Eagles) should have a glittering array of talent available. Although he is getting limited game time at Real Madrid, captain Mahamadou Diarra is back after almost a year out injured, while Seydou Keita is now an established member of Barcelona's side and Frederic Kanoute's goalscoring know-how continues to flourish at Sevilla. Another boost is midfielder Momo Sissoko gradually working his way back to full fitness at Juventus.

Mali's weakness is the great variance between their top talent and the rest of the squad, often giving an imbalance and leaving the team's potential unfulfilled.

They have the ability to make an impact in Angola but will need the right mix of swagger and confidence.

THE MAIN MEN

COACH
STEPHEN KESHI
An African Nations Cup winner as a player when he captained Nigeria to success in 1994. Coached Togo to the 2006 World Cup finals, but was replaced before the tournament began.

KEY PLAYER
SEYDOU KEITA
The team's talisman over the last year, emerging from the shadows of his equally illustrious colleagues.

KANOUTE AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING

Diarra and Sissoko will be anchors with Keita sweeping forward to join an attacking line-up led by Kanoute. He has an exciting partner in Modibo Maiga and possibly also Mamadou Diallo or Mamadou Bagayoko. Central defender Adama Coulibaly is nicknamed "Police" for his stopping ability, but Mahamadou Sidibe in goal is a weak link.

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP GROUP B

BURKINA FASO

Group outsiders

A weak backline could prove extremely costly in Angola for Duarte's *Etalons*

Goal threat...Dagano

THE SURPRISE package of the first round of the qualifiers – they emerged with an unbeaten record, including an away win over Tunisia – *Les Etalons* (the Stallions) were expected to run Ivory Coast close in the second-group phase but folded alarmingly, losing 5-0 in June.

A tiff between coach Paulo Duarte and the national press saw him quickly turn from hero to villain, but more of a concern to his tenure was his decision to take up an offer to coach Le Mans in Ligue 1 at the start of the season, doubling it up the role with the Burkina job. He will be leaving the French side for the period of the African Nations Cup, but a divided focus cannot be good for either the club or the country of which he is in charge.

Striker Moumouni Dagano, who was a flop in France and now plays for Al Khor in Qatar, finished top scorer in the qualifiers with 12 goals in as many games. Charles Kabore of Marseille and Hamburg's Jonathan Pitroipa are also key players.

Burkina's best performance in the competition came in 1998 when, as hosts, they reached the semi-finals.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
PAULO DUARTE
The first coach of an African national team to job-share with a European club side.

KEY PLAYER
MOUMOUNI DAGANO
Had spells in Europe with Belgian and French clubs before being linked with a possible move to Bolton Wanderers last summer, but nothing materialised.

MUST KEEP IT TIGHT AT THE BACK

The axis of Kabore, Pitroipa and Dagano will be central to Burkina Faso's planning, with Belgian-based captain Mahamoudou Kere of Charleroi the anchor. Duarte switched to 4-4-2 after disappointing qualifying results in June and defence has been a weakness. There is likely to be a fair deal of caution given their difficult opponents.

GHANA

Powerful engines

Dominant midfield, led by Essien, will be the key to the Black Stars' success

Knee problems...Appiah

DESPITE being shy in front of goal, the Black Stars were still the first African side to qualify for the 2010 World Cup, and their unbeaten record in the last phase of the qualifiers was only ceded after they had secured places in both Angola and South Africa.

Asamoah Gyan's return to fitness after injury – plus his morale-boosting goals for Rennes in Ligue 1 – adds an extra element to their already dominant midfield play. Another big bonus is that captain Stephen Appiah, who played in the qualifiers even though he had been without a club following a serious knee injury, has now joined Bologna of Italy.

However, in Sulley Muntari and Michael Essien, Ghana already have two world-class midfielders. And if John Mensah is fit, they have an imposing presence at the back too.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
MILOVAN RAJEVAC
Previously worked at Red Star Belgrade and Vojvodina in his native Serbia.

KEY PLAYER
MICHAEL ESSIEN
Has been among the three finalists for the African Footballer of the Year award for five years but yet to have won.

MIDFIELD IS A MATCH FOR ANYONE

Appiah provides the guile, while Essien is the engine and muscle in the continent's best midfield. Gyan is a major beneficiary from Appiah's well-timed passes, but he could play further up front to allow Matthew Amoah to operate just behind him, ready and willing to pounce.

IVORY COAST

Time for action

Can the rampaging Elephants end an 18-year wait for African Nations Cup success?

Attacking threat...Kalou

RUNNERS-UP in 2006 and easily the best side in Ghana in 2008 – until imploding in the semi-finals against eventual winners Egypt – could this, given their deep resources of talent, be a case of third time lucky for the Ivorians?

Certainly their comfortable stroll through the qualifiers, where they were the only team to go unbeaten in their 10 matches, suggests that the Elephants will be strong contenders. Didier Drogba's remarkable tally of 41 goals in 60 internationals indicates his importance to the side, but he has strong support from the likes of Salomon Kalou and Bakari Kone in attack, Yaya Toure and Didier Zokora in midfield, and Kolo Toure and Emmanuel Eboue in defence. Such is their depth of talent that Galatasaray's Abdul Kader Keita – for whom Lyon paid £12.5million two years ago – is not always guaranteed a starting place.

A tough group ensures a start from which the Ivorians can build a platform to go on and win their first African Nations Cup since 1992. They have as good a chance as any time in the past.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
VAHID HALILHODZIC
Lost just one of his 19 games since taking charge in May 2008.

KEY PLAYER
DIDIER DROGBA
Ivory Coast icon and arguably the world's liest centre-forward.

TALENT ALL OVER THE PITCH

Linchpin Drogba plays a much deeper role than at club level, where he is a target man for Chelsea. His front-line partner is likely to be club-mate Kalou – but if Kone is back from injury he has often proved a better foil. Yaya Toure and Zokora are the ball winners in midfield and Eboue adds an option going forward.

TOGO

Adebayaor calls shots

Manchester City striker has a massive influence on his team-mates – both on and off the field

Dominating...Adebayor

IT NEEDED victory over Gabon in their last qualifying game to ensure a place in Angola for an *Eperviers* (Sparrowhawks) side still coming down to earth after their giant-killing exploits in reaching the 2006 World Cup finals.

Driven on by the charisma and class of striker Emmanuel Adebayor, who has become an ever larger-than-life figure in his home country since his summer move to Manchester City, Togo fumbled their way through the qualifiers and used four different coaches during the campaign.

Among the casualties were Henri Stambouli of France and Belgium's Jean Thissen – who, bizarrely, after claiming he felt unwell before a game in September was swiftly sidelined by the federation, despite his protests that he would still be able to prepare his team for the match. Why they didn't just fire him is probably best answered by speculation that they did not want to pay out the remaining terms of his contract.

Unheralded French coach Hubert Velud has since come in, but it is Adebayor who really calls the shots these days.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
HUBERT VELUD
Took charge of the side at end of September.

KEY PLAYER
EMMANUEL ADEBAYOR
His goals and presence will be a big factor in how far his side go in the tournament.

ADEBAYOR LEADS FROM THE FRONT

With a player of Adebayor's quality, it is only natural that the game revolves around him and he sees as much of the ball as possible. This can occasionally mean using the giant forward as a target man, but Velud will also need an effective Plan B.

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP GROUP C

BENIN

Size matters

Naturalised Nigerians have helped *Les Ecureuils* grow in stature

Goal...Benin celebrate against Sudan

THE SMALLEST of the African Nations Cup finalists, both in terms of land mass and player resources, Benin's proximity to Nigeria means that a lot of players have crossed the border, been naturalized and gone on to play for the national team, making *Les Ecureuils* (the Squirrels) considerably more competitive in recent times.

Razak Omotoyossi, who has been the side's most persistent goalscorer in recent years, is one such example, but although he was among the best players at the last finals in Ghana, his club career has staggered since he left Sweden and his form has dipped.

Benin's best-known player is Paris Saint-Germain's Stephane Sessegnon, but there are often complaints over his alleged lack of dedication to the national cause. That he is originally Ivorian probably plays some part in this. Yet despite his inconsistency, Sessegnon is a quality attacking midfielder.

French coach Michel Dussuyer brings plenty of experience to the tournament, having coached Guinea at the 2004 finals and been Henri Michel's assistant in 2006 when Ivory Coast were beaten by Egypt on penalties in the Final.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
MICHEL DUSSUYER
Brings a guarded tone to his discussions but displays a distinct passion for African football.

KEY PLAYER
STEPHANE SESSEGNON
Cost PSG an estimated £7million when he moved to the French capital from Le Mans in 2008.

LIMITED RESOURCES DICTATE TACTICS

A lack of depth in the ranks means Dussuyer has to base his game plan around Sessegnon and Omotoyossi, though he often relegates Sessegnon to the bench in place of more workmanlike performers. They played well in their group game against Ghana by keeping a tight midfield and trying to break quickly on the back of Omotoyossi's pace.

EGYPT

History beckons

The Pharaohs hope three-in-a-row will lessen the blow of their World Cup exclusion

Class act...Aboutraika (left)

EGYPT WILL BE attempting to do what no one has done before by winning three African Nations Cups in a row to extend their overall record of continental successes to seven titles.

However, the impact of November's elimination from the World Cup in a play-off against Algeria remains to be seen. Will it have sucked the motivation out of an ageing side who have achieved everything possible save for qualifying for the World Cup? Or will it galvanise them into making up for the disappointment by setting a new milestone in African football?

For players like Ahmed Hassan, Wael Gomaa, Essam Al Hadary and Mohamed Barakat – and possibly the talismanic Mohamed Aboutraika – Angola will be a last outing.

Coach Hassan Shehata has been trying to blend in new talent quite liberally over the last year, but his tenure is also unclear. Presumably, unless he returns from Angola with the trophy, he too will pay a price for World Cup qualification failure.

Egypt may be the undisputed masters of this tournament – as are their club sides in continental competition – but their World Cup failure will surely weigh heavily on them in Angola.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
HASSAN SHEHATA
Won the last two African Nations Cup finals – the only coach with back-to-back triumphs.

KEY PLAYER
MOHAMED ZIDAN
Has overcome several brushes with authority over his discipline to once again establish himself in the side.

TALENT ALL OVER THE PITCH

The clever penetrative play of Aboutraika and the running of Barakat are key to success, combined with the incredible pace of Zidan – when he is on song. There is also the work of Abd Rabo in the centre of midfield and the tireless efforts of Hassan, who is mostly used as a sub these days.

MOZAMBIQUE

On the up

The shock defeat of Tunisia and an unexpected qualification could lead to bigger and better things

In reserve...Carlitos

IT HAS BEEN more than 10 years since the Mambas last reached the African Nations Cup finals, but an unbeaten home run in the 2010 World Cup qualifiers ensured they finished third behind Nigeria and Tunisia in their group to usurp Kenya for a place in Angola.

Dutch coach Mart Nooij has become a folk hero after a win over Tunisia in their final group game not only ensured qualification but also knocked the north African giants out of the World Cup.

Portugal used to be the destination of choice for the best local Mozambican talent, but neighbouring South Africa's top clubs offer competitive wages these days and have become the new favoured alternative.

Among those based just across the border is captain Tico-Tico, now 36, who will be playing in a third African Nations Cup after first appearing in the 1996 and 1998 finals. He is his country's top goalscorer and most-capped international and will quit at the end of the tournament.

THE MAIN MEN

COACH
MART NOOIJ
Worked previously as a junior coach in Burkina Faso and as an instructor for the Dutch football federation.

KEY PLAYER
DOMINGUES
Was voted as the best player in the South African league in 2008 with Supersport United. Now at Mamelodi Sundowns.

CREATIVE BUT CAN BE WASTEFUL

Left-footed Domingues is a key component of the team, while Simao at the back brings Champions League experience with Panathinaikos and Dario Khan is a ferocious tackler. Up front Dario and Tico-Tico waste a lot of chances but are full of enthusiasm and the occasional clever run.

NIGERIA

Under pressure

Qualification for the World Cup finals may not be enough to save coach

On top...Yobo

THE SUPER EAGLES might be World Cup finalists but qualification was far from convincing and there is a sword of execution again hanging over the head of coach Shaibu Amodu.

Ironically, the 51-year-old was in the same position in 2002 when he led the side to the World Cup, only to be fired after Nigeria finished third at the African Nations Cup finals, a few months before the tournament in Japan and South Korea.

Speculation swirling around the coach is most unsettling – as are the injury concerns over Obafemi Martins. The clamour for a big name foreign boss is ironic when contrasted with the vitriol that German coach Berti Vogts had to stomach from the Nigerian press and supporters when he was in charge at the last tournament.

Nigeria haven't won the trophy since 1994, though they have been consistent campaigners and, given their immense playing resources, are always among the realistic challengers. However, their current squad does not have the resonance of that of a few years ago and the aura around the Eagles is certainly less intimidating than before.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
SHAIBU AMODU
Took charge of the national team for a fourth time in April 2008.

KEY PLAYER
JOHN OBI MIKEL
Refused to play for Nigeria's Under-23 side at the last Olympic Games in Beijing.

ROTATION CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS

Nigeria have shuffled their starting line-up consistently and coach Amodu has been criticised for being too defensive. But this is probably because he does not have a real playmaker to make use of the ball won by Mikel and Olofinjana in midfield. Finding a defensive partner for Yobo has also been difficult in recent years.

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP GROUP D

CAMEROON

In with a shout

The Indomitable Lions will expect to be there or thereabouts once again

Eto'o partner...Webo

CAMEROON are perennial challengers for glory at the African Nations Cup and seemingly peaking at the right time following a strong run at the end of their World Cup qualifiers. Four successive victories saw them comfortable winners of their group, even though they looked in deep trouble at one stage.

Paul Le Guen arrived in July to resurrect their fortunes and is credited with a strong turnaround. Whether they keep that momentum going in Angola remains to be seen, but they will certainly be among the favourites. Giving Samuel Eto'o a new leadership role has been a Le Guen masterstroke and the addition of Tottenham Hotspur defenders Sebastien Bassong and Benoit Essou-Akotto has stabilised things at the back.

Jean Makoun may have had an awful Nations Cup in Ghana, where he was eventually relegated to the bench, but he is back on form. With the addition of Achille Emana, Stephane Mbia and Alexandre Song, they have one of the best midfields on the circuit.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
PAUL LE GUEN
Won the French league with Lyon but then had disappointing spells with Rangers in Scotland and Paris Saint-Germain.

KEY PLAYER
SAMUEL ETO'O
Has managed more goals for Cameroon than any other player and is the all-time leading scorer at the African Nations Cup with 16.

ETO'O IS STILL THE ONE TO WATCH

Emana is the playmaker of the side with three enforcers around him. Makoun, Mbia and Alexandre Song will gain plenty of possession to ensure he gets a steady supply up front. In defence, the 33-year-old Rigobert Song is likely to still get a game.

GABON

Future hopes

The co-hosts of the next African Nations Cup will hope to learn a lot this time out

Hope...Aubameyang

GABON were contenders for World Cup qualification with three rounds to go until they were swept aside by neighbours Cameroon in their group. And now they are forced to play them again – which will be a hammer blow to the psyche of Alain Giresse's side.

Admittedly, it was always a long shot for Gabon to get to South Africa and they can be satisfied with an African Nations Cup place for just the fourth time. With a population of under two million, to have been in contention for a World Cup spot right up to the last group game is a considerable feat for a side carefully put together by Giresse.

Gabon will co-host the next Nations Cup finals in 2012 and, with a little patience, they could have a competitive side in two years' time. But it is likely the World Cup run has set a false reality and therefore an early exit in a tough group in Angola could well cost Giresse his job and put back the work he has already done.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
ALAIN GIRESSE
A former France international with past coaching experience in Africa.

KEY PLAYER
DANIEL COUSIN
Had to be persuaded to rejoin the national team set-up after several years of ignoring their call-ups.

LACK OF COMPETITION WILL TELL

Many key players have been without club football recently and therefore the strength to compete in intense competition could be missing. Cousin's temperamental performances do not help the balance, but he is a cut above the rest in terms of ability.

TUNISIA

Travel sickness

Poor form away from home makes success hard to come by on the road

At home...Darragi (second left)

COACH Humberto Coelho was fired after World Cup failure in November and the north Africans go to Angola with their tails between their legs. Although their Nations Cup place was secured with ease, Tunisia's participation is almost an afterthought after the bitter disappointment of failing to reach South Africa 2010.

Coelho has been replaced by Faouzi Benzarti – who arrived in similar circumstances once before, in 1994, when Tunisia lost the opening game of the Nations Cup they were hosting – and he inherits a team in transition.

With Tunisian clubs always highly competitive and many of the national squad now in Europe, the production line of players is good. However, while a consistently high profile has kept Tunisia up among the continent's big guns, they have never travelled well outside of north Africa and there is every reason to believe Angola will be a toil for them.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
FAOUZI BENZARTI
Won the African Champions Cup in 1994 with Tunisian club Esperance.

KEY PLAYER
SAIF GHEZAL
Defender who enjoyed several African cup successes with Etoile Sahel before joining Youngs Boys of Bern in Switzerland.

PACKED MIDFIELD IS HARD TO BREAK DOWN

A cautious approach in the World Cup qualifiers ultimately cost Tunisia, though a five-man midfield always makes them difficult to play against and players such as Ossama Barragi and Chaouki Ben Saada are exciting talents with match-winning potential.

ZAMBIA

Aiming high

A tough group could prove too much for the ambitious *Chipolopolo*

Needs help...Jacob Mulenga (left)

THEY MIGHT play more international football than most countries – a benefit of having only a few players at clubs abroad, which therefore makes it easier to set aside more dates for the national team – but any such advantage appears to be lost with the high turnover of players.

Zambia's consistency in qualifying for the Nations Cup is almost unmatched, but it has been 14 years since they made it out of the group stage.

Coach Herve Renard has set qualification for the quarter-finals as his objective this time, but foolishly made that target public before the draw. Being paired with Cameroon and Tunisia leaves the *Chipolopolo* (copper bullets) again facing the prospect of being also-rans in another tough draw. They had Cameroon and Egypt in Kumasi in the 2008 finals, with Cameroon pulverising the Zambians 5-1 in one of the tournament's all-time inept defensive performances.

Renard is in his first senior job and has had difficulties coming to terms with the vagaries of African football. He almost walked out on the team less than a year ago.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH
HERVE RENARD
Was assistant coach of hosts Ghana at the last African Nations Cup.

KEY PLAYER
CHRIS KATONGO
Zambia's highest profile professional in Europe. Has been playing in Germany with Arminia Bielefeld since 2008 and was in Denmark before that.

PACE IS THEIR BIG THREAT

The pace of the Katongo brothers, Chris and Felix, is the major weapon for a side who are lightweight in midfield and, at times, slovenly in defence. Goalkeeper Kennedy Mweene is underrated and has played a big part in extricating his team from tough situations in the past.

Standard-bearer...Felipe (right)

BELGIUM

Standard youngest for five years

The Standard Liege side that was beaten 2-0 away to Arsenal had an average age of 22 years and 352 days, making it the youngest line-up in a Champions League match for five years.

Goals from Samir Nasri and Denilson meant the English club progressed to the knockout stage and maintained their record of qualifying from the group phase in all seven tournaments since the current format was introduced in 2003.

ISRAEL

Maccabi Haifa's goal

A 1-0 defeat in Germany by Bayern Munich meant that Maccabi Haifa are the only team in this season's group stage of the Champions League not to have scored a single goal after five games.

Ivica Olic scored the home side's winning goal after Nir Davidovitch could only parry Mario Gomez's shot.

ITALY

La Viola end a decade of waiting

Fiorentina secured their first qualification for the Champions League knockout stage in 10 years with a 1-0 win at home to Lyon.

The French side also qualified at the expense of the 2005 winners Liverpool after they grabbed a late equaliser in their home game against the five-times champions.

Liverpool now drop into the Europa League – a competition (in the guise of the old UEFA Cup) in which they haven't played in since 2003.

RESULTS

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Nov 3
Bayern Munich (Ger) 0
Bordeaux (Fra) 2 (Gourcuff 37, Chamakh 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 66,000. **Ref:** Proença (Por)
Bayern: Butt - Lahm, Demichelis, Badstuber, Braafheid (Gomez 58), Van Bommel, Schweinsteiger, Tymoshchuk, Pranjic, Klose (Robben 46), Toni.
Bordeaux: Carrasso - Chalme, Ciani, Planus, Tremoulinas, Fernando, Diarra, Plasil (Sane 84), Wendel (Jussie 68), Gourcuff, Chamakh.

Nov 3
Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 0
Juventus (Ita) 1 (Camoranesi 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 39,120. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Maccabi: Davidovich - Meshumar, Keinan, Jorge Teixeira, Masilela, Culma (Ghadir 46), Boccoli (Zaguri 70), Osman, Katan, Dvalishvili (Rafaelov 56), Arbeitman.
Juventus: Buffon - Caceres, Legrottaglie, Chiellini, Grosso, Felipe Melo, Paulsen, Tiago (De Ceglie 60), Camoranesi, Diego, Amauri (Nezegueet 84).

Nov 25
Bayern Munich 1 (Olic 62)
Maccabi Haifa 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 58,000. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Bayern: Butt - Lahm, Van Buyten, Demichelis, Badstuber, Muller, Schweinsteiger, Van Bommel, Pranjic (Ottl 70), Gomez, Olic (Tymoshchuk 81).
Maccabi: Davidovich - Meshumar, Keinan, Maymon, Masilela, Osman (Golasa 74), Culma (Rafaelov 69), Kayal, Ghadir, Katan, Dvalishvili (Arbeitman 63).

Nov 25
Bordeaux 2 (Fernando 54, Chamakh 90)
Juventus 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,195. **Ref:** Iturralde Gonzalez (Spa)
Bordeaux: Carrasso - Chalme, Ciani, Planus, Tremoulinas, Diarra, Fernando, Gouffran (Traore 75), Plasil, Wendel, Chamakh.
Juventus: Buffon - Caceres, Legrottaglie, Chiellini, Grosso, Sissoko (Marchisio 89), Felipe Melo, Camoranesi, Diego, Del Piero (Immobile 88), Amauri (Giovinco 77).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bordeaux	5	4	1	0	8	2	13
Juventus	5	2	2	1	3	3	8
Bayern	5	2	1	2	5	4	7
Maccabi Haifa	5	0	0	5	0	7	0

Group B

Nov 3
Besiktas (Tur) 0
Wolfsburg (Ger) 3 (Misimovic 14, Gentner 80, Dzeko 87)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 18,116. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Besiktas: Hakan - Ibrahim Kas, Sivok, Ferrari, Ibrahim Uzulmez (Ismail 78), Fink, Inceman, Ekrem, Tabata (Nobre 89), Bobo, Serdar (Tello 46).
Wolfsburg: Benaglio - Riether, Ricardo Costa, Madlung, Schafer, Josue, Hasebe (Pekarik 46), Gentner, Misimovic (Santana 88), Dzeko, Martins (Dejagah 66).

Nov 3
Manchester United (Eng) 3 (Owen 29, Scholes 84, Valencia 90)
CSKA Moscow (Rus) 3 (Dzagoev 25, Krasic 31, V Berezutsky 47)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 73,718. **Ref:** Benquerença (Por)
Man Utd: Van der Sar - Neville, Brown, Evans, Fabio (Eva 58), Valencia, Fletcher, Scholes, Nani (Rooney 58), Macheda (Obertan 82), Owen.
CSKA: Akinfeev - A Berezutsky, V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, Schennikov, Krasic, Semberas, Aldonin, Mamaev (Rahimic 70), Necid (Pillev 85), Dzagoev (Daniel Carvalho 72). *Sent off: Semberas 90+min.*

Nov 25
CSKA Moscow 2 (Necid 58, Krasic 66)
Wolfsburg 1 (Dzeko 19)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 13,478. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
CSKA: Akinfeev - A Berezutsky, V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, Schennikov, Rahimic, Aldonin, Krasic, Mamaev, Dzagoev, Necid.
Wolfsburg: Benaglio - Riether, Ricardo Costa, Madlung, Schafer, Josue, Hasebe, Gentner, Misimovic, Dzeko, Martins (Ziani 68).

Nov 25
Manchester United 0
Besiktas 1 (Tello 20)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 74,242. **Ref:** Lannoy (Fra)
Man Utd: Foster - Neville, Vidic, Brown, Rafael (Eva 74), Obertan, Gibson (Carrick 74), Anderson, Park (Owen 68), Macheda, Welbeck.
Besiktas: Rustu - Ibrahim Kas, Ferrari, Ibrahim Toraman (Erhan 67), Ibrahim Uzulmez, Fink, Ernst, Ekrem, Tello (Inceman 75), Ismail, Bobo (Batuhan 84).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	5	3	1	1	7	5	10
Wolfsburg	5	2	1	2	8	5	7
CSKA Moscow	5	2	1	2	6	9	7
Besiktas	5	1	1	3	2	6	4

Group C

Nov 3
Marseille (Fra) 6 (Aegerter og 3, Abriel 11, Niang 51, Hilton 80, Cheyrou 87, Brandao 90)
Zurich (Swi) 1 (Alphonse 31)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 56,282. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Marseille: Mandanda - Bocaly, Diawara, Hilton, Heinze, Abriel (Kabore 68), Mbia (Cisse 84), Cheyrou, Kone (Valbuena 61), Brandao, Niang.
Zurich: Leoni - Stahel, Tihinen, Rochat, Koch, Okonkwo, Aegerter (Gajic 46), Vonlanthen (Mehmedi 9), Margairaz, Djuric, Alphonse (Nikci 77).

Nov 3
Milan (Ita) 1 (Ronaldinho pen 35)
Real Madrid (Spa) 1 (Benzema 29)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 75,092. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Milan: Dida - Oddo, Nesta, Thiago Silva, Zambiotta, Ambrosini, Pirlo, Alexandre Pato, Seedorf, Ronaldinho, Borriello (Inzaghi 78).
Real Madrid: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Albiol, Pepe, Arbeloa, Xabi Alonso, L Diarra, Kaka, Benzema (Van Nistelrooy 82), Marcelo, Higuain (Raul 75).

Nov 25
Milan 1 (Borriello 18)
Marseille 1 (Gonzalez 16)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 46,063. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Milan: Dida - Oddo (Abate 28), Nesta, Thiago Silva, Zambiotta, Pirlo, Ambrosini, Seedorf, Alexandre Pato, Borriello, Ronaldinho.
Marseille: Mandanda - Bonnart, Diawara, Heinze, Taiwo, Cisse, Cheyrou (Morientes 85), Abriel, Gonzalez (Kone 66), Niang (Ben Arfa 73), Brandao.

Nov 25
Real Madrid 1 (Higuain 21)
Zurich 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 67,867. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Pepe, Albiol, Arbeloa (Van der Vaart 58), L Diarra, Xabi Alonso, Kaka (Granero 90), Marcelo, Raul (Cristiano Ronaldo 70), Higuain.
Zurich: Leoni - Stahel, Tihinen, Barmettler, Koch, Gajic (Vonlanthen 76), Aegerter, Rochat, Djuric (Schenbachler 88), Margairaz, Alphonse (Mehmedi 86).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	5	3	1	1	12	6	10
Milan	5	2	2	1	7	6	8
Marseille	5	2	1	2	9	7	7
Zurich	5	1	0	4	4	13	3

Group D

Nov 3
APOEL Nicosia (Cyp) 0
Porto (Por) 1 (Falcao Garcia 84)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,825. **Ref:** Skomina (Slv)
APOEL: Chiotis - Poursaitidis, Broerse, Konts (Papathanasiou 87), Elia (Gmcarov 57), Nuno Morais, Satsias, Charalambidis, Helio Pinto, Jean Paulista (Alexandrou 81), Mirosavljevic.
Porto: Helton - Sapunaru, Rolando, Bruno Alves, Pereira, Guarin (Tomas Costa 83), Fernando, Raul Meireles, Rodriguez (Farias 69), Hulk, Falcao Garcia (Belluschi 90).

Nov 3
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 2 (Aguero 66, 90)
Chelsea (Eng) 2 (Drogba 82, 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 36,284. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Atletico: Asenjo - Perea, Pablo, Juanito, Antonio Lopez, Reyes (Rodriguez 73), Paulo Assuncao, Cleber Santana, Simao (Jurado 83), Sinama-Pongolle (Aguero 53), Forlan.
Chelsea: Cech - Belletti, Alex, Terry, A Cole, Essien (Ballack 58), Malouda, J Cole (Deco 70), Lampard, Drogba, Kalou (Anelka 70).

Nov 25
APOEL Nicosia 1 (Mirosavljevic 5)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Simao 62)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 21,178. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
APOEL: Chiotis - Poursaitidis, Paulo Jorge, Konts, Elia (Breska 70), Kosowski (Zawlakow 77), Nuno Morais, Michael (Bruerse 71), Alexandreu, Helio Pinto, Mirosavljevic.
Atletico: Asenjo - Ujfalusi, Perea, Juanito, Dominguez, Jurado (Rodriguez 79), Camacho, Cleber Santana, Simao (Antonio Lopez 90), Aguero, Forlan (Reyes 87).

Nov 25
Porto 0
Chelsea 1 (Anelka 69)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 38,410. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Porto: Beto - Sapunaru (Farias 79), Rolando, Bruno Alves, Pereira, Belluschi (Guarin 71), Fernando, Raul Meireles, Silvestre Varela (Hulk 60), Falcao Garcia, Rodriguez.
Chelsea: Cech - Ivanovic, Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, Zhirkov, Mikel, Ballack (Essien 68), Deco (J Cole 78), Malouda, Drogba, Anelka.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	5	4	1	0	9	2	13
Porto	5	3	0	2	5	3	9
Atl Madrid	5	0	3	2	3	9	3
APOEL	5	0	2	3	2	5	2

Group E

Nov 4
Fiorentina (Ita) 5 (Mutu 14, Dainelli 52, Montolivo 60, Marchionni 61, Gilardino 74)
Debrecen (Hun) 2 (Rudolf 38, Coulibaly 70)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 19,676. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Fiorentina: Avramov - Comotto, Gamberini (Kroldrup 33), Dainelli, Pasqual, Donadel, Zanetti (Montolivo 46), Marchionni, Mutu, Vargas (Santana 77), Gilardino.
Debrecen: Pantic - Bodnar, Szelesi, Komlosi (Kiss 10), Leandro, Czvitkovics, Ramos (Coulibaly 53), Varga, Laczko (Szakaly 65), Fedor, Rudolf.

Nov 4
Lyon (Fra) 1 (Lopez 90)
Liverpool (Eng) 1 (Babel 83)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 39,180. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Lyon: Lloris - Reveillere (Gassama 18), Cris, Toulalan, Cissokho, Pjanic (Ederson 40), Makoun, Kallstrom, Michel Bastos, Lopez, Gomis (Govou 73).
Liverpool: Reina - Carragher, Agger, Kyrgiakos, Insua, Lucas, Mascherano, Kuijt, Voronin (Babel 68), Benayoun, Fernando Torres (Ngog 87).

Nov 24
Debrecen 0
Liverpool 1 (Ngog 4)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 41,500. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Debrecen: Poleksic - Bodnar, Meszaros, Mijadinoski, Fedor (Dombi 78), Szelesi, Kiss, Szakaly (Coulibaly 62), Czvitkovics, Laczko, Rudolf.
Liverpool: Reina - Johnson, Carragher, Agger, Insua, Kuijt, Lucas, Mascherano, Pablo Aurelio (Dossena 89), Gerrard (Aquilani 90), Ngog (Benayoun 77).

Nov 24
Fiorentina 1 (Vargas pen 28)
Lyon 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 34,301. **Ref:** Benquerença (Por)
Fiorentina: Frey - De Silvestri (Cornolto 86), Dainelli, Kroldrup, Gobbi, Zanetti (Jorgensen 80), Montolivo, Marchionni, Santana (Donadel 70), Vargas, Gilardino.
Lyon: Lloris - Gassama, Cris, Boumsong, Cissokho, Makoun, Pjanic, Kallstrom, Govou (Delgado 74), Gomis (Ederson 79), Michel Bastos (Lopez 67).

Strong...Unirea (in white)

ROMANIA

History beckons

A first home win in Europe put Unirea Urziceni on the brink of the Champions League last 16.

They beat Sevilla 1-0 with a bizarre own goal from Ivica Dragutinovic, who headed a free-kick from the halfway line past his own keeper.

TURKEY

United record ended

Besiktas ended Manchester United's 23-match unbeaten home run in the Champions League when Rodrigo Tello scored the only goal of their game at Old Trafford.

It was a memorable night for the visitors' 36-year-old goalkeeper, Rustu Recber, who conceded six times for Fenerbahce when playing at Old Trafford six years ago.

300 times John Terry has captained Chelsea, following the away game against Porto

Uplifting...Rustu (in blue)

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fiorentina	5	4	0	1	12	6	12
Lyon	5	3	1	1	8	3	10
Liverpool	5	2	1	2	4	5	7
Debrecen	5	0	0	5	5	15	0

Group F

Nov 4
Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 1 (Shevchenko 21)
Internazionale (Ita) 2 (Milito 86, Sneijder 89)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,900. **Ref:** Layec (Fra)
Dynamo: Bogush - Eremenko, Khacheridi, Leandro Almeida, Gerson Magrao, Shevchenko, Mikhalik, Vukojevic, Yarmolenko, Ninkovic, Milevskyi (Husiev 70).
Inter: Julio Cesar - Maicon, Lucio, Samuel (Muntari 79), Chivu (Balotelli 46), Cambiasso (Thiago Motta 46), Zanetti, Stankovic, Sneijder, Eto'o, Milito.

Nov 4
Rubin Kazan (Rus) 0
Barcelona (Spa) 0
Att: 24,600. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Rubin: Ryzhikov - Salukvadze, Sharonov, Cesar Navas, Ansaldi, Ryazantsev, Noboa, Semak, Kaleshin, Gokdeniz (Bukharov 63), Dominguez.
Barcelona: Valdes - Daniel Alves, Pique, Puyol, Abidal, Xavi, Toure, Keita (Henry 83), Messi, Ibrahimovic, Iniesta.

Nov 24
Barcelona 2 (Pique 10, Pedro 26)
Internazionale 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 93,524. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Barcelona: Valdes - Daniel Alves, Pique, Puyol, Abidal (Maxwell 89), Xavi, Busquets, Keita, Iniesta (Dos Santos 90), Henry, Pedro (Bojan 85).
Inter: Julio Cesar - Maicon, Lucio, Samuel, Chivu, Zanetti, Cambiasso (Muntari 46), Thiago Motta, Stankovic (Balotelli 71), Milito (Ricardo Quaresma 82), Eto'o.

Nov 24
Rubin Kazan 0
Dynamo Kyiv 0
Att: 23,185. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Rubin: Ryzhikov - Salukvadze, Sharonov (Kaleshin 53), Cesar Navas, Ansaldi, Gokdeniz (Bystrov 75), Semak, Noboa, Ryazantsev, Dominguez, Bukharov.
Dynamo: Shovkovskyi - Eremenko, Yussuf, Betao, Gerson Magrao, Mikhalik, Ninkovic (Ghioane 86), Vukojevic, Shevchenko, Milevskyi, Yarmolenko.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	5	2	2	1	5	2	8
Internazionale	5	1	3	1	5	6	6
Rubin Kazan	5	1	3	1	4	5	6
Dynamo Kyiv	5	1	2	2	6	7	5

Group G

Nov 4
Sevilla (Spa) 1 (Jesus Navas 14)
Stuttgart (Ger) 1 (Kuzmanovic 78)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 32,669. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Sevilla: Javi Varas - Konko, Squillaci, Escude, Fernando Navarro, Zokora, N'Dri (Duscher 62), Jesus Navas, Capel (Perotti 58), Kone (Negredo 30), Luis Fabiano.
Stuttgart: Lehmann - Boulahrouz (Celozzi 46), Tasci, Delpierre, Boka, Kuzmanovic, Hilbert (Rudy 46), Hitzlsperger (Schieber 64), Hleb, Elson, Pogrebnyak.

Nov 4
Unirea Urziceni (Rom) 1 (Onofras 88)
Rangers (Sco) 1 (McCulloch 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,923. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Urziceni: Arlauskis - Bordeanu, Galamaz, Maftei, Brandan, Balan (Onofras 28), Ricardo Gomes (Paduretu 81), Apostol, Frunza, Bilasco, Varga (Semedo 81).
Rangers: McGregor - Whittaker, Wilson, Weir, Papac, Naismith, Davis, McCulloch, Thomson (Fleck 85), Lafferty, Miller (Novo 82).

Nov 24
Rangers 0
Stuttgart 2 (Rudy 16, Kuzmanovic 59)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 41,468. **Ref:** Rosetti (Ita)
Rangers: McGregor - McCulloch, Weir, Wilson, Whittaker, Papac, Davis, Thomson (Fleck 76), Miller (Novo 68), Lafferty (Beasley 85), Boyd.
Stuttgart: Lehmann - Osorio, Niedermeier, Delpierre, Boka, Kuzmanovic (Hitzlsperger 75), Trasch, Rudy (Gebhart 90), Hleb, Cacau (Schieber 82), Pogrebnyak.

Nov 24
Unirea Urziceni 1 (Dragutinovic og 45)
Sevilla 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,007. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Urziceni: Arlauskis - Galamaz, Maftei, Mehmedovic, Bordeanu, Ricardo Gomes (Paduretu 90), Apostol, Brandan, Varga (Semedo 88), Bilasco, Frunza (Balan 63).
Sevilla: Javi Varas - Konko, Sergio Sanchez, Dragutinovic, Fernando Navarro, Jesus Navas, Zokora, Lolo (Renato 62), Capel (Luis Fabiano 82), Kanoute, Negredo (Perotti 70).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sevilla	5	3	1	1	10	4	10
Urziceni	5	2	2	1	7	5	8
Stuttgart	5	1	3	1	6	6	6
Rangers	5	0	2	3	4	12	2

Group H

Nov 4
Arsenal (Eng) 4 (Fabregas 25, 52, Nasri 43, Diaby 72)
AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 1 (Lens 82)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 59,345. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Arsenal: Almunia - Eboue, Gallas, Vermaelen, Gibbs, Diaby, Nasri, Song, Arshavin (Rosicky 74), Fabregas (Ramsey 66), Van Persie (Eduardo 67).
AZ: Romero - Jaliens, Moisander, Moreno, Poulsen (Pocognoli 64), Dembele (Lens 58), Mendes da Silva (Wernbloom 70), Holman, Schaars, Martens, Pelle.

Nov 4
Standard Liege (Blg) 2 (Mbokani 31, Jovanovic 88)
Olympiakos (Gre) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 24,787. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Standard: Bolat - Camozzato, Sarr (Victor Ramos 46), Felipe, Ricardo Rocha, Witsel, Mangala, Carcela-Gonzalez (Goreux 87), De Camargo, Jovanovic (Angeli 90), Mbokani.
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Galitsios, A Papadopoulos (I Papadopoulos 78), Mellberg, Zewlakow, Galletti (Fetfatzidis 42), Dudu Cearense, Maresca, Raul Bravo, Oscar (Stoltidis 78), Milroglou.

ESM Team of the Month

European Sports Magazines — NOVEMBER 2009

Cesc Fabregas — Arsenal — Votes
Dani Alves — Barcelona — Votes
Petr Cech — Chelsea — Votes
John Terry — Chelsea — Votes
Gerard Pique — Barcelona — Votes
Michael Essien — Chelsea — Votes

Marco Borriello — Milan — Votes
Mesut Ozil — Werder Bremen — Votes
Jermain Defoe — Tottenham Hotspur — Votes
Xavi — Barcelona — Votes
Gonzalo Higuain — Real Madrid — Votes

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Magazines group vote for their first XI from Europe's top leagues. The players with the most votes make the overall team. For details of how ESM members voted this month, visit: **worldsoccer.com/esm11**

CROATIA

Zagreb get points back

The UEFA Appeals Body replaced the three-point deduction handed to Dinamo Zagreb in the Europa League with a £65,000 fine, and a suspended ban from European club competition, in the wake of serious crowd disturbances that occurred at their Europa League away match against Timisoara in October.

Lost again...Karnten (in yellow)

AUSTRIA

Karnten beaten again

Austria Karnten's dismal season continued with a 13th league defeat as they lost 1-0 at Austria Wien.

The solitary goal from Emin Sulimani allowed the club from the capital to move within three points of the top of the table as second-place Salzburg were held 0-0 at home by leaders Rapid Vienna.

BELGIUM

Genk's new coach

Former national boss Frank Vercauteren replaced Hein Vanhaezebrouck as coach of Genk following their 2-0 defeat at Mouscron.

BULGARIA

Penev can't quit

CSKA Sofia refused to accept the resignation of their coach Luboslav Penev, who said he was quitting in a dispute with the club's owners. Club bosses had reinstated nine players after Penev had suspended them for drinking binges.

DENMARK

OB take advantage

Last season's double winners Copenhagen surrendered top place to OB Odense after losing 1-0 at AaB. Marcus

Nov 24
Arsenal 2 (Nasri 35, Denilson 45)
Standard Liege 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 59,941. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Arsenal: Almunia - Eboue, Gallas (Silvestre 46), Vermaelen, Gibbs, Song, Denilson (Rosicky 66), Arshavin, Fabregas, Nasri (Walcott 60), Vela.
Standard: Bolat - Camozzato, Sarr, Felipe, Mulemo, Dalmat (Traore 64), Witsel, Goreux, Mangala, Carcela-Gonzalez, Mbokani (Cyriac 68).
Sent off: Carcela-Gonzalez 88min.

Nov 24
AZ Alkmaar 0
Olympiakos 0
Att: 16,213. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
AZ: Romero - Swerts, Moisander, Moreno, Pocognoli, Dembele (Pelle 68), Mendes da Silva, Wernbloom, Schaars (Marlens 89), Holman (Ari 78), Lens.
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Galitsios, Mellberg, Zewlakow, Raul Bravo, Zairi (Pantos 90), Dudu Cearense, Maresca, Leonardo, Oscar, Mitroglou.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	5	4	1	0	12	4	13
Olympiakos	5	2	1	2	3	5	7
Standard	5	1	1	3	6	8	4
AZ Alkmaar	5	0	3	2	3	7	3

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round; 3rd-placed teams enter Europa League at 1st knockout round stage

EUROPA LEAGUE

Group A
Oct 22: Ajax (Hol) 2 Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 1; Timisoara (Rom) 0 Anderlecht (Blg) 0.
Nov 5: Anderlecht 3 Timisoara 1; Dinamo Zagreb 0 Ajax 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	4	2	2	0	5	2	8
Anderlecht	4	2	2	0	6	2	8
Dinamo Z*	4	1	0	3	4	6	3
Timisoara	4	0	2	2	1	6	2

**Dinamo's 3pt deduction for crowd trouble during the match at Timisoara was reduced to a fine on appeal*

Group B
Oct 22: Lille (Fra) 3 Genoa (Ita) 0; Valencia (Spa) 1 Slavia Prague (Cze) 1.
Nov 5: Genoa 3 Lille 2; Slavia Prague 2 Valencia 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lille	4	2	1	1	11	5	7
Valencia	4	1	3	0	7	6	6
Genoa	4	2	0	2	7	8	6
Slavia Prague	4	0	2	2	4	10	2

Group C
Oct 22: Celtic (Sco) 0 Hamburg (Ger) 1; Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 5 Rapid Wien (Aut) 1.
Nov 5: Hamburg 0 Celtic 0; Rapid Wien 0 Hapoel Tel Aviv 3.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hapoel Tel Aviv	4	3	0	1	12	6	9
Hamburg	4	2	1	1	5	5	7
Rapid Wien	4	1	1	2	5	9	4
Celtic	4	0	2	2	2	4	2

Group D
Oct 22: Hertha Berlin (Ger) 0 Heerenveen (Hol) 1; Ventspils (Lat) 1 Sporting Lisbon (Por) 2.
Nov 5: Heerenveen 2 Hertha Berlin 3; Sporting Lisbon 1 Ventspils 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting L	4	3	1	0	7	4	10
Hertha Berlin	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Heerenveen	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Ventspils	4	0	3	1	3	4	3

Group E
Oct 22: CSKA Sofia (Bul) 0 Basle (Swi) 2; Fulham (Eng) 1 Roma (Ita) 1.
Nov 5: Basle 3 CSKA Sofia 1; Roma 2 Fulham 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	4	3	0	1	7	2	9
Roma	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Fulham	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
CSKA Sofia	4	0	1	3	2	8	1

Group F
Oct 22: Galatasaray (Tur) 4 Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) 1; Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 Sturm Graz (Aut) 0.
Nov 5: Dinamo Bucharest 0 Galatasaray 3; Sturm Graz 0 Panathinaikos 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray	4	3	1	0	11	3	10
Panathinaikos	4	3	0	1	4	3	9
Dinamo Buch	4	1	0	3	2	8	3
Sturm Graz	4	0	1	3	1	4	1

Group G
Oct 22: Lazio (Ita) 2 Villarreal (Spa) 1; Salzburg (Aut) 1 Levski Sofia (Bul) 0.
Nov 5: Levski Sofia 0 Salzburg 1; Villarreal 4 Lazio 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg	4	4	0	0	6	1	12
Villarreal	4	2	0	2	6	5	6
Lazio	4	2	0	2	8	7	6
Levski Sofia	4	0	0	4	0	7	0

Group H
Oct 22: Sheriff (Mol) 2 Twente Enschede (Hol) 0; Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 0 Fenerbahce (Tur) 1.
Nov 5: Fenerbahce 3 Steaua Bucharest 1; Twente Enschede 2 Sheriff 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	4	3	0	1	6	3	9
Twente	4	2	1	1	4	4	7
Sheriff	4	1	1	2	3	3	4
Steaua	4	0	2	2	1	4	2

Group I
Oct 22: BATE Borisov (Bls) 2 AEK Athens (Gre) 1; Benfica (Por) 5 Everton (Eng) 0.
Nov 5: AEK Athens 2 BATE Borisov 2; Everton 0 Benfica 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica	4	3	0	1	9	1	9
Everton	4	2	0	2	6	8	6
BATE Borisov	4	1	1	2	5	7	4
AEK Athens	4	1	1	2	4	8	4

Group J
Oct 22: Club Brugge (Blg) 2 Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 0; Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 4 Toulouse (Fra) 0.
Nov 5: Partizan Belgrade 2 Club Brugge 4; Toulouse 0 Shakhtar Donetsk 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP J

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	4	4	0	0	14	2	12
Club Brugge	4	2	1	1	8	8	7
Toulouse	4	1	1	2	5	10	4
Partizan	4	0	0	4	5	13	0

Group K
Oct 22: PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 1 Copenhagen (Den) 0; Sparta Prague (Cze) 2 CFR Cluj (Rom) 0.
Nov 5: CFR Cluj 2 Sparta Prague 3; Copenhagen 1 PSV Eindhoven 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP K

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	4	2	2	0	5	3	8
Sparta Prague	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Copenhagen	4	1	1	2	2	4	4
CFR Cluj	4	1	0	3	4	8	3

Group L
Oct 22: Athletic Bilbao (Spa) 2 Nacional (Por) 1; Austria Wien (Aut) 2 Werder Bremen (Ger) 2.
Nov 5: Nacional 1 Athletic Bilbao 1; Werder Bremen 2 Austria Wien 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP L

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Werder	4	3	1	0	10	5	10
Ath Bilbao	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Nacional	4	0	2	2	5	7	2
Austria Wien	4	0	2	2	3	8	2

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round, to which the third-placed sides from the eight Champions League groups will also qualify

ARMENIA

ARMENIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pyunik	28	20	5	3	64	13	65
Mika	28	16	4	8	58	34	58
Ulysses	28	16	5	7	47	25	53
Banants	28	13	5	10	40	29	44
Gandzasar	28	12	2	14	32	47	38
Shirak	28	5	8	15	24	55	23
Kilikia	28	5	5	18	22	51	20
Ararat (R)	28	2	8	18	20	54	14

Promoted: Impuls Dilijan

AUSTRIA

Nov 7: Mattersburg 4 Kapfenberger 1.
Nov 8: Austria Wien 1 Sturm 0; Ried 1 Austria Karnten 0; Wiener Neustadt 2 Salzburg 3; LASK 3 Rapid 3.
Nov 21: Sturm 0 Ried 2; Kapfenberger 0 Salzburg 2; Austria Karnten 0 Mattersburg 3.
Nov 22: Rapid 4 Austria Wien 1.
Nov 25: Wiener Neustadt 4 LASK 1; Rapid 2 Sturm 1.
Nov 27: Ried 0 Mattersburg 0.
Nov 28: Kapfenberger 3 Wiener Neustadt 1; LASK 2 Sturm 2; Austria Wien 1 Austria Karnten 0.
Nov 29: Salzburg 0 Rapid 0.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid	17	10	5	2	39	16	35
Salzburg	17	10	5	2	36	17	35
Austria Wien	17	10	2	5	29	21	32
Sturm	17	8	4	5	26	17	28
Ried	17	7	6	4	23	15	27
Mattersburg	17	7	1	9	23	29	22
W Neustadt	17	5	3	9	26	35	18
LASK	17	4	5	8	39	47	17
Kapfenberger	17	5	2	10	19	32	17
A Karnten	17	1	3	13	13	44	6

BELGIUM

Nov 6: Charleroi 0 Gent 2.
Nov 7: Cercle Brugge 2 Westerlo 1; Lokeren 0 Kortrijk 0; Mechelen 0 Mouscron 1; Roeselare 2 Zulte Waregem 0; Germinal Beerschol 4 St Truiden 1.
Nov 8: Genk 0 Anderlecht 2; Standard 3 Club Brugge 1.
Nov 21: Gent 2 Standard 1; Club Brugge 1 Germinal Beerschot 2; Anderlecht 3 Roeselare 1; St Truiden 1 Cercle Brugge 1; Mouscron 4 Charleroi 1; Westerlo 1 Lokeren 0.
Nov 22: Zulte Waregem 4 Mechelen 1; Kortrijk 2 Genk 1.
Nov 27: Anderlecht 1 Kortrijk 0.
Nov 28: Mouscron 2 Genk 0; Club Brugge 1 Charleroi 0; Gent 3 Cercle Brugge 1; Westerlo 2 Mechelen 0; Germinal Beerschol 3 Roeselare 0.
Nov 29: Zulte Waregem 1 Lokeren 0; St Truiden 2 Standard 0.

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	16	12	2	2	30	12	38
Club Brugge	16	10	3	3	31	20	33
Germinal B	16	9	3	4	25	19	30
Gent	16	8	3	5	28	18	27
Z Waregem	16	7	5	4	28	22	26
Standard	16	6	7	3	25	16	25
Mechelen	16	7	0	9	20	26	21
St Truiden	16	6	3	7	20	23	21
Westerlo	16	6	3	7	19	24	21
Kortrijk	16	5	6	5	18	17	21
Mouscron	16	5	5	6	20	21	20
Genk	16	4	5	7	18	21	17
Cercle Brugge	16	4	5	7	23	26	17
Charleroi	16	3	5	8	17	30	14
Lokeren	16	3	3	10	16	26	12
Roeselare	16	2	4	10	19	37	10

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Nov 4: Siroki Brijeg 2 Sarajevo 0.
Nov 7: Sloboda 1 Modrica 2; Rudar 3 Olimpik 1; Zvijezda 1 Celik 0; Borac 2 Velez 0; Zeljeznicar 1 Sarajevo 2.
Nov 8: Slavija 3 Laktasi 1; Zrinjski 3 Leotar 0; Siroki Brijeg 1 Travnik 0.
Nov 21: Travnik 6 Modrica 5; Sarajevo 3 Rudar 0; Laktasi 0 Zeljeznicar 1; Leotar 2 Slavija 1; Celik 4 Zrinjski 1.
Nov 22: Olimpik 1 Borac 2; Siroki Brijeg 5 Zvijezda 0; Velez 1 Sloboda 0.
Nov 29: Zvijezda 1 Travnik 0; Zrinjski 4 Siroki Brijeg 1; Slavija 1 Celik 0; Zeljeznicar 3 Leotar 1; Rudar 2 Laktasi 0; Borac 0 Sarajevo 1; Sloboda 0 Olimpik 0; Modrica 1 Velez 1.

Back on top...Olsen

Tracy was on target for the Aalborg club.

OB coach Lars Olsen now believes the biggest obstacle to his side winning the title is the transfer window.

"Foreign clubs with offers of £3million or £4m might be able to take players such as Peter Utaka and Eric Djemba-Djemba away from us," says Olsen. "And we cannot be sure if Johan Absalonsen will choose to leave us when his contract expires in the new year."

ENGLAND

Spurs score nine against Wigan

Jermain Defoe scored five second-half goals as Tottenham thrashed Wigan Athletic 9-1 to consolidate their place in the top four. The result was Spurs' biggest victory in the top flight and

Five...Defoe (left)

their biggest win since beating Bristol Rovers 9-0 in in 1977.

Meanwhile, France Under-19 striker Gael Kakuta – whose controversial move from Lens to Chelsea earned the Premier League side a "two-window" transfer ban, which has been suspended while the Stamford Bridge club appeal – made his debut for the Blues as a substitute in their 4-0 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Siroki Brijeg	15	10	2	3	27	12	32
Borac	15	10	1	4	20	9	31
Sarajevo	15	8	4	3	21	14	28
Velez	15	8	3	4	27	13	27
Zeljeznicar	15	7	4	4	19	13	25
Zrinjski	15	7	4	4	23	19	25
Leotar	15	7	1	7	14	19	22
Modrica	15	6	3	6	24	25	21
Rudar	15	6	2	7	14	14	20
Olimpik	15	5	4	6	15	23	19
Travnik	15	5	3	7	21	22	18
Zvijezda	15	5	2	8	15	25	17
Slavija	15	4	4	7	14	17	16
Celik	15	4	3	8	14	17	15
Sloboda	15	4	2	9	10	23	14
Laktasi	15	2	2	11	15	28	8

BULGARIA

Nov 6: Lokomotiv Mezdra 0 Montana 2.
Nov 7: Beroe 3 Botev 1; Cherno More 4 Lokomotiv Sofia 2; Sportist 1 Sliven 0; Chernomorets 1 Lovech 2.
Nov 8: Pirin 0 Levski 2; CSKA 2 Slavia 0.
Nov 9: Lokomotiv Plovdiv 3 Minyor 3.
Nov 20: Montana 0 Pirin 3.
Nov 21: Botev 1 Sportist 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 2 CSKA 2; Sliven 1 Lokomotiv Mezdra 0; Levski 3 Cherno More 0; Lovech 5 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0.
Nov 22: Slavia 3 Chernomorets 2.
Nov 23: Minyor 3 Beroe 0.
Nov 25: Levski 2 Lovech 2.
Nov 27: Pirin 2 Sliven 0.
Nov 28: Cherno More 0 CSKA 0; Lokomotiv Mezdra 2 Botev 2; Sportist 0 Minyor 1; Levski 3 Montana 1.
Nov 29: Beroe 3 Lovech 0; Chernomorets 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 2.
Nov 30: Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0 Slavia 2.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lovech	14	10	2	2	26	9	32
CSKA	14	9	3	2	24	8	30
Levski	14	8	2	4	29	15	26
Chernomorets	14	8	2	4	23	14	26
Lok Sofia	14	7	4	3	22	17	25
Minyor	14	7	2	5	21	12	23
Beroe	14	6	5	3	17	14	23
Pirin	14	6	3	5	12	11	21
Slavia	14	6	3	5	13	14	21
Cherno More	14	5	4	5	17	13	19
Montana	14	4	5	5	13	17	17
Lok Mezdra	14	4	1	9	16	28	13
Sliven	14	3	2	9	12	22	11
Sportist	14	3	2	9	11	24	11
Lok Plovdiv	14	2	3	9	13	30	9
Botev	14	1	3	10	10	31	6

CROATIA

Nov 7: Istra 2 Karlovac 0; Zadar 2 Varteks 0; Slaven 1 Lokomotiva 0; Medimurje 1 Hajduk 1; Sesvete 0 Cibalia 3; Osijek 5 Zagreb 3; Inter 3 Rijeka 0.
Nov 8: Dinamo 5 Sibenik 0.
Nov 20: Zagreb 4 Zadar 0.
Nov 21: Lokomotiva 0 Inter 1; Rijeka 2 Istra 0; Varteks 0 Slaven 0; Cibalia 1 Osijek 1; Hajduk 6 Sesvete 0; Sibenik 1 Medimurje 0.
Nov 22: Karlovac 1 Dinamo 3.
Nov 28: Istra 0 Dinamo 0; Karlovac 2 Medimurje 0; Sibenik 2 Sesvete 0; Hajduk 1 Osijek 0; Cibalia 2 Zadar 0; Zagreb 3 Slaven 3; Varteks 2 Inter 1; Lokomotiva 3 Rijeka 0.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	16	11	3	2	47	9	36
Sibenik	16	10	3	3	18	14	33
Cibalia	16	9	5	2	25	7	32
Osijek	16	8	4	4	32	25	28
Slaven	16	8	4	4	29	25	28
Karlovac	16	7	5	4	16	12	26
Hajduk	16	7	4	5	21	12	25
Rijeka	16	6	4	6	25	23	22
Lokomotiva	16	7	1	8	19	22	22
Inter	16	6	2	8	23	24	20
Varteks	16	5	4	7	16	22	19
Zadar	16	5	3	8	13	25	18
Medimurje	16	5	2	9	20	34	17
Istra	16	3	4	9	14	29	13
Zagreb	16	3	2	11	21	34	11
Sesvete	16	1	4	11	17	39	7

CYPRUS

Nov 7: Aris 3 Nea Salamina 1; APOP 0 AEP 0; ENP 0 Omonia 4; Anorthosis 2 Ethnikos 1.
Nov 8: Apollon 2 Doxa 0; Ermis 1 AEL 0.
Nov 9: APOEL 3 APEP 1.
Nov 14: AEP 2 ENP 0; Doxa 1 APOP 2; APEP 0 Anorthosis 2.
Nov 15: Ethnikos 0 Apollon 1; AEL 1 Aris 0; Nea Salamina 0 APOEL 3.
Nov 18: Omonia 1 Ermis 0.
Nov 21: ENP 1 Doxa 1; APOEL 2 Anorthosis 0; Apollon 2 APEP 0.
Nov 22: Ermis 0 AEP 0; APOP 3 Ethnikos 0; Aris 0 Omonia 1.
Nov 28: Nea Salamina 1 AEL 3.
Nov 29: AEP 1 Aris 3; Ethnikos 1 ENP 0; APEP 2 APOP 3; Anorthosis 1 Apollon 1.
Nov 29: Doxa 1 Ermis 1; Omonia 1 Nea Salamina 1.
Nov 30: AEL 1 APOEL 2.

CYPRUS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Omonia	11	8	3	0	20	7	27
APOEL	11	8	2	1	23	8	26
Apollon	11	7	3	1	18	6	24
Anorthosis	11	7	3	1	16	9	24
APOP	11	7	2	2	20	13	23
AEL	11	6	1	4	14	8	19
Ermis	11	3	3	5	14	14	12
Aris	11	3	3	5	15	17	12
AEP	11	3	3	5	11	15	12
ENP	11	2	4	5	9	17	10
Doxa	11	2	3	6	10	18	9
Ethnikos	11	2	1	8	6	18	7
APEP	11	1	2	8	7	19	5
Nea Salamina	11	0	3	8	6	25	3

CZECH REPUBLIC

Nov 7: Liberec 0 Olomouc 4; Ostrava 2 Kladno 0; Teplice 1 Jablonec 0.
Nov 8: Ceske Budejovice 1 Mlada Boleslav 3; Bohemians 2 Brno 1; Bohemians 1905 1 Pribram 0.
Nov 9: Slavia 0 Plzen 0; Slovacko 0 Sparta 1.
Nov 21: Kladno 1 Bohemians 1905 2; Pribram 2 Slovacko 0; Plzen 3 Bohemians 2; Brno 0 Ceske Budejovice 3; Sparta 2 Liberec 0; Jablonec 1 Slavia 1.
Nov 22: Mlada Boleslav 3 Ostrava 1.
Nov 23: Olomouc 6 Teplice 2.
Nov 28: Slovacko 1 Jablonec 1; Liberec 3 Mlada Boleslav 0; Pribram 3 Kladno 2; Bohemians 1905 0 Sparta 2.
Nov 29: Ceske Budejovice 3 Bohemians 0; Slavia 3 Brno 1.
Nov 30: Ostrava 2 Olomouc 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Teplice	15	9	5	1	29	16	32
Sparta	16	8	8	0	19	7	32
Ostrava	16	9	4	3	23	15	31
Jablonec	16	9	4	3	17	12	31
Plzen	15	7	5	3	17	13	26
M Boleslav	16	7	4	5	28	21	25
Slavia	16	6	6	4	21	14	24
Pribram	16	7	2	7	17	17	23
Olomouc	16	6	4	6	27	17	22
Liberec	16	6	2	8	18	22	20
Bohemians 1905	16	4	5	7	9	13	17
Brno	16	4	5	7	13	22	17
C Budejovice	16	3	5	8	13	21	14
Slovacko	16	4	2	10	14	23	14
Kladno	16	3	2	11	12	27	11
Bohemians	16	3	1	12	15	32	10

DENMARK

Nov 7: HB Koge 1 AGF 1; Silkeborg 0 OB 1.
Nov 8: Midtjylland 2 Randers 1; SonderjyskE 0 Nordsjaelland 1; Brondby 2 Esbjerg 4; AaB 1 Copenhagen 0.
Nov 21: HB Koge 1 Nordsjaelland 2; Midtjylland 3 Esbjerg 0.
Nov 22: Silkeborg 1 SonderjyskE 2; Copenhagen 2 Randers 0; Brondby 1 OB 3.
Nov 23: AaB 0 AGF 0.
Nov 28: Esbjerg 1 AaB 1.
Nov 29: Randers 0 SonderjyskE 0; Copenhagen 2 Midtjylland 0; Nordsjaelland 0 Silkeborg 1; AGF 1 Brondby 0.
Nov 30: OB 1 HB Koge 0.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
OB	17	11	5	1	29	15	38
Copenhagen	17	10	4	3	29	11	34
Esbjerg	17	9	5	3	30	20	32
Brondby	17	8	3	6	35	29	27
Silkeborg	17	7	5	5	27	20	26
AGF	17	7	5	5	23	22	26
AaB	17	7	4	6	20	13	25
Midtjylland	17	6	3	8	22	28	21
Nordsjaelland	17	6	2	9	19	24	20
SonderjyskE	17	5	4	8	13	18	19
HB Koge	17	1	5	11	14	39	8
Randers	17	0	5	12	11	32	5

ENGLAND

Wednesday, November 4
West Ham 2 (Noble pen 45, Hines 90)
Aston Villa 1 (A Young 52) Att: 30,024

Saturday, November 7
Aston Villa 5 (A Young 5, Agbonlahor 43, Carew 53, Milner 72, Cuellar 75)
Bolton 1 (Elmander 44) Att: 38,101

Blackburn 3 (Roberts 53, 86, Nelsen 73)
Portsmouth 1 (O'Hara 15) Att: 23,110

Manchester City 3 (Wright-Phillips 43, Toure 55, Bellamy 58)
Burnley 3 (Alexander pen 19, Fletcher 32, McDonald 87) Att: 47,205

Tottenham 2 (Keane 12, Huddlestone 68)
Sunderland 0 Att: 35,955

Wolverhampton 1 (Craddock 89)
Arsenal 4 (Zubar og 28, Craddock og 35, Fabregas 45, Arshavin 68) Att: 28,937

Sunday, November 8
Chelsea 1 (Terry 76)
Manchester United 0 Att: 41,836

Hull 2 (Olofinjana 62, Vennegoor of Hesselink 90)
Stoke 1 (Etherington 29) Att: 24,516

West Ham 1 (Hibbert og 65)
Everton 2 (Saha 27, Gosling 64) Att: 32,466

Wigan 1 (Boyce 13)
Fulham 1 (Dempsey pen 39) Att: 16,172

Monday, November 9
Liverpool 2 (Ngog 13, Gerrard pen 71)
Birmingham 2 (Benitez 26, Jerome 45) Att: 42,560

Saturday, November 21
Birmingham 1 (Bowyer 16)
Fulham 0 Att: 23,659

Burnley 1 (Caldwell 9)
Aston Villa 1 (Heskey 86) Att: 21,178

Chelsea 4 (Malouda 5, Essien 12, 22, J Cole 56)
Wolverhampton 0 Att: 41,786

Hull 3 (Cole og 27, Zayatte 44, Bullard pen 45)
West Ham 3 (Franco 5, Collison 11, Da Costa 69) Att: 24,909

Liverpool 2 (Skrtel 50, Benayoun 77)
Manchester City 2 (Adebayor 69, Ireland 76) Att: 44,164

Manchester United 3 (Fletcher 35, Carrick 67, Valencia 76)
Everton 0 Att: 75,169

Sunderland 1 (Bent 71)
Arsenal 0 Att: 44,918

Sunday, November 22
Bolton 0
Blackburn 2 (Dunn 32, Ricketts og 73) Att: 21,777

Stoke 1 (Fuller 74)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 27,069

Tottenham 9 (Crouch 9, Defoe 51, 54, 58, 69, 87, Lennon 64, Kirkland og 88, Kranjcar 90)
Wigan 1 (Scharner 57) Att: 35,650

Wednesday, November 25
Fulham 3 (Nevland 43, Dempsey 67, 88)
Blackburn 0 Att: 21,414

Hull 3 (Hunt 9, Dawson 20, Marney 28)
Everton 2 (Zayatte og 48, Saha pen 65) Att: 24,685

Saturday, November 28
Aston Villa 1 (Agbonlahor 10)
Tottenham 1 (Dawson 77) Att: 39,866

Blackburn 0
Stoke 0 Att: 25,143

Fulham 1 (Duff 75)
Bolton 1 (Klasnic 35) Att: 23,554

Manchester City 1 (Wright-Phillips 45)
Hull 1 (Bullard pen 82) Att: 46,382

Portsmouth 1 (Boateng pen 32)
Manchester United 4 (Rooney pen 25, 48, pen 54, Giggs 87) Att: 20,482

Winners... Valenciennes (in white)

FRANCE

Rare home loss

Reigning champions Bordeaux briefly surrendered their place at the top of the table when they lost 1-0 at home to Valenciennes – their first Ligue 1 defeat at Stade Chaban-Delmas in 39 games and for more than two years.

The following week, however, they won 3-0 at Nancy and regained top spot from Auxerre, who lost 1-0 at Paris Saint-Germain. After 12 games, Grenoble got their first point of the campaign with a 0-0 draw away to Monaco.

Meanwhile, Lyon and Marseille shared 10 goals in a remarkable game at Stade Gerland which ended 5-5.

GERMANY

Season opener

The German Super Cup will be reintroduced from next season for the first time in 14 years, pitting the Bundesliga champions against the German Cup winners in the official season opener.

GREECE

Top two swap places

Reigning league champions Olympiakos beat arch-rivals Panathinaikos 2-0 to leapfrog them at the top of the table. Konstantinos Mitroglou scored both goals.

HOLLAND

Loyal servant set to step down

Groningen coach Ron Jans, who is the longest-serving coach in Dutch professional football, will stand down at the end of the season.

The 51-year-old, who took charge of *De Trots Van Het*

West Ham 5 (Collison 18, Stanislas 33, Cole pen 43, Franco 51, Jimenez pen 64)
Burnley 3 (Fletcher 68, 74, Eagles 90) Att: 34,003

Wigan 1 (Rodallega 76)
Sunderland 0 Att: 20,447

Sunday, November 29
Arsenal 0
Chelsea 3 (Drogba 41, 86, Vermaelen og 45) Att: 60,067

Everton 0
Liverpool 2 (Yobo og 12, Kuijt 80) Att: 39,652

Wolverhampton 0
Birmingham 1 (Bowyer 3) Att: 26,668

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	14	12	0	2	36	8	36
Man Utd	14	10	1	3	30	13	31
Tottenham	14	8	2	4	33	19	26
Arsenal	13	8	1	4	36	18	25
Liverpool	14	7	2	5	31	20	23
Aston Villa	14	6	5	3	32	14	23
Man City	13	5	7	1	24	17	22
Sunderland	14	6	2	6	21	20	20
Stoke	14	5	5	4	13	15	20
Fulham	14	5	4	5	18	16	19
Birmingham	14	5	3	6	12	14	18
Burnley	14	5	2	7	18	31	17
Blackburn	14	5	2	7	16	28	17
Wigan	14	5	2	7	15	31	17
Hull	15	4	4	7	17	31	16
Everton	14	4	3	7	17	25	15
West Ham	14	3	5	6	24	26	14
Bolton	13	3	3	7	16	27	12
Wolves	14	2	4	8	12	27	10
Portsmouth	14	2	1	11	11	23	7

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Jermain Defoe (Tottenham)
11 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
10 Fernando Torres (Liverpool)
10 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)
9 Darren Bent (Sunderland)
8 Louis Saha (Everton)

FINLAND

FINNISH CUP – Final

Oct 31 - Helsinki
Tampere 1 (Hjelm 10)
Inter 2 (Nwanganga 45, Furuholm 77)
HT: 1-1. Att: 2,065

FRANCE

Saturday, November 7
Le Mans 0
Auxerre 1 (Joao Paulo og 51) Att: 7,996

Lorient 5 (Gameiro 33, 48, Vahirua 45, 58, Amalfitano 90)
Boulogne 0 Att: 9,145

Monaco 0
Grenoble 0 Att: 8,347

Nancy 0
Saint-Etienne 1 (Payet 71) Att: 16,076

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Nice 1 (Remy 88) Att: 36,300

Sochaux 1 (Privat 90)
Lens 2 (Sartre 38, Boukari 85) Att: 12,438

Valenciennes 1 (Sanchez 52)
Montpellier 1 (Montano 3) Att: 12,633

Sunday, November 8
Lille 2 (Cabaye 70, Balmont pen 87)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 16,233

Lyon 5 (Pjanic 3, Govou 14, Lopez 61, pen 84, Michel Bastos 90)
Marseille 5 (Diawara 11, Cheyrou 44, Kone 47, Brandao 79, Toulalan og 90+) Att: 38,018

Toulouse 3 (Sissoko 31, Braaten 59, Gignac 63)
Rennes 2 (Gyan 44, Mangane 84) Att: 15,405

Friday, November 20
Marseille 1 (Heinze 25)
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 55,623

Saturday, November 21
Auxerre 2 (Coulibaly 45, Ndinga 88)
Monaco 0 Att: 14,851

Bordeaux 0
Valenciennes 1 (Samassa 7) Att: 27,431

Grenoble 1 (Ljuboja 73)
Lyon 1 (Delgado 66) Att: 15,563

Lens 2 (Jemaa 81, Monnet-Paquet 83)
Nancy 1 (Alo'o 53) Att: 31,189

Rennes 2 (Mangane 10, Gyan 81)
Le Mans 1 (Lamah 55) Att: 20,292

Sunday, November 22
Montpellier 2 (Montano 65, 87)
Lille 0 Att: 14,376

Nice 1 (Remy pen 51)
Toulouse 0 Att: 9,485

Saint-Etienne 0
Lorient 2 (Vahirua 4, Sosa 17) Att: 24,851

Saturday, November 28
Lens 1 (Eduardo 90)
Marseille 0 Att: 41,052

Lille 4 (Frau 42, Kouassi 52, 61, Cabaye pen 87)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 13,367

Lorient 2 (Cesar og 36, Gameiro 90)
Grenoble 2 (Matsui 63, Juan 71) Att: 8,736

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Clement 67)
Auxerre 0 Att: 34,849

Sochaux 1 (Mikari 29)
Nice 0 Att: 11,533

Toulouse 1 (Fofana 29)
Boulogne 0 Att: 27,430

Sunday, November 29
Le Mans 1 (Le Tallec 73)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Ilan 18) Att: 9,799

Lyon 1 (Lopez 42)
Rennes 1 (Gyan 14) Att: 35,978

Nancy 0
Bordeaux 3 (Fernando 25, Wendel 61, Gouffran 75) Att: 18,223

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bordeaux	14	9	1	4	23	10	28
Lyon	14	7	5	2	24	18	26
Auxerre	14	8	2	4	15	11	26
Lorient	14	7	4	3	24	13	25
Montpellier	13	7	3	3	21	16	24
Valenciennes	14	7	2	5	24	20	23
Marseille	13	6	4	3	23	16	22
Monaco	13	7	1	5	16	13	22
Toulouse	14	6	3	5	15	11	21
Rennes	14	5	5	4	20	14	20
Nice	14	6	2	6	16	22	20
PSG	13	5	4	4	18	13	19
Lille	14	5	4	5	18	16	19
Sochaux	13	6	0	7	14	19	18
Lens	14	5	3	6	14	21	18
Nancy	14	5	2	7	16	22	17
Saint-Etienne	14	4	2	8	11	18	14
Le Mans	14	2	3	9	12	21	9
Boulogne	13	2	3	8	9	23	9
Grenoble	14	0	3	11	6	26	3

LEADING GOALSCORERS
9 Nene (Monaco)
8 Asamoah Gyan (Rennes)
7 Kevin Gameiro (Lorient)
7 Loic Remy (Nice)

GERMANY

Friday, November 6
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Kiessling 2, Reinartz 6, Kroos 11, Bender 86)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 30,000

Saturday, November 7
Bayern Munich 1 (Van Buyten 31)
Schalke 1 (Matip 43) Att: 69,000

Bochum 1 (Klimowicz 65)
Freiburg 2 (Butscher 23, Reisinger 90) Att: 20,403

1899 Hoffenheim 1 (Ibisevic 23)
Wolfsburg 2 (Misimovic 52, Grafite 57) Att: 29,400

Mainz 1 (Soto 38)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 20,000

Monchengladbach 0
Stuttgart 0 Att: 47,053

Sunday, November 8
Hannover 2 (Ya Konan 26, Stajner pen 88)
Hamburg 2 (Jansen 15, Elia 44) Att: 49,000

Hertha Berlin 0
Koln 1 (Novakovic 79) Att: 48,623

Werder Bremen 1 (Ozil 36)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Barrios 54) Att: 34,906

Saturday, November 21
Borussia Dortmund 0
Mainz 0 Att: 74,600

Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Schwegler pen 86)
Monchengladbach 2 (Nikolov og 54, Brouwers 65) Att: 50,000

Freiburg 0
Werder Bremen 6 (Hugo Almeida 33, 57, Marin 55, Ozil 67, Naldo pen 73, Rosenberg 82) Att: 24,000

Koln 0
1899 Hoffenheim 4 (Carlos Eduardo 5, Obasi 11, Ba 46, Ibisevic pen 90) Att: 45,000

Schalke 2 (Farfan 69, Moravek 90)
Hannover 0 Att: 61,505

Stuttgart 1 (Kuzmanovic 82)
Hertha Berlin 1 (Ramos 49) Att: 39,000

Wolfsburg 2 (Dejagah 59, Grafite pen 79)
Nurnberg 3 (Bunjaku 56, 64, Kluge 90) Att: 28,736

Sunday, November 22
Bayern Munich 1 (Gomez 8)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Kiessling 14) Att: 69,000

Hamburg 0
Bochum 1 (Grote 77) Att: 53,838

Friday, November 27
Bochum 0
Koln 0 Att: 29,102

Saturday, November 28
Hertha Berlin 1 (Ramos 81)
Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Ochs 11, Franz 70, Meier 75) Att: 48,253

1899 Hoffenheim 1 (Ba 49)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Blaszczykowski 2, Sahin pen 79) Att: 30,150

Mainz 1 (Hoogland 84)
Hamburg 1 (Torun 3) Att: 20,300

Monchengladbach 1 (Reus 5)
Schalke 0 Att: 54,057

Nurnberg 0
Freiburg 1 (Reisinger 12) Att: 40,824

Werder Bremen 2 (Hugo Almeida 62, Mertesacker 90)
Wolfsburg 2 (Dzeko 42, 85) Att: 34,523

Sunday, November 29
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Kiessling 22, 59, pen 87, Derdiyok 39)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 30,210

Hannover 0
Bayern Munich 3 (Muller 19, Olic 47, Gomez 90) Att: 49,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Leverkusen	14	8	6	0	30	9	30
Werder	14	7	6	1	31	12	27
Schalke	14	7	4	3	21	13	25
Bayern	14	6	6	2	22	11	24
Hamburg	14	6	6	2	28	18	24
Hoffenheim	14	7	2	5	25	13	23
Mainz	14	6	5	3	20	18	23
Wolfsburg	14	6	4	4	27	25	22
B Dortmund	14	5	6	3	15	16	21
E Frankfurt	14	5	4	5	17	21	19
M'gladbach	14	5	3	6	16	21	18
Hannover	14	4	4	6	16	19	16
Freiburg	14	5	1	8	17	30	16
Koln	14	3	4	7	7	15	13
Nurnberg	14	3	3	8	12	21	12
Bochum	14	3	3	8	13	25	12
Stuttgart	14	2	5	7	11	20	11
Hertha Berlin	14	1	2	11	9	30	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Stefan Kiessling (Bayer Leverkusen)
6 *Eight players on 6 goals*

Noorden (the pride of the north) in November 2002, twice took them into the UEFA Cup. Groningen general director Hans Nijland said: "For us he is more than a coach, he has become the figurehead of the club."

Elsewhere, PSV striker Ola Toivonen, who hadn't scored since the opening day of the season, netted four times in the Eindhoven club's 5-1 away win at Den Haag. The Swede had failed to score in 11 games and had also been dropped by coach Fred Rutten.

Figurehead...Jans

ISRAEL

Derby debut for David

Freddy David began his new career as coach of Maccabi Petach-Tikva with a 1-1 draw in the derby against Hapoel Petach-Tikva, whose coach Dani Niron quit after a 7-1 loss to Hapoel Tel-Aviv.

ITALY

Top-flight sides go out

Third-tier clubs Lumezzane and Novara are through to the last 16 of the Italian Cup after beating Atalanta and Siena.

Genoa beat Sampdoria 3-0 in a fiery *Derby della Lanterna*, during which Samp duo Marco Rossi and Fabrizio Cacciatore, and the home side's Giuseppe Biava, were all sent off.

Seeing red...Biava (no25)

GREECE

Nov 1: Aris 0 Kavala 0; Olympiakos 1 Iraklis 1; Panthrakikos 1 PAOK 2.
Nov 8: Atromitos 0 Ergotelis 0; Xanthi 1 Panionios 2; Asteras 3 Giannina 0; Levadiakos 0 Panathinaikos 2.
Nov 9: AEK 3 Larisa 1.
Nov 21: Kavala 2 AEK 1; Xanthi 1 Levadiakos 0; Giannina 2 Olympiakos 2.
Nov 22: Iraklis 2 Atromitos 2; Panathinaikos 1 Asteras 1; Panionios 3 Panthrakikos 1; PAOK 4 Aris 1.
Nov 28: Asteras 0 Xanthi 0; Iraklis 0 Ergotelis 2; AEK 1 PAOK 0.
Nov 29: Larisa 1 Kavala 0; Panthrakikos 0 Levadiakos 2; Aris 1 Panionios 1; Atromitos 2 Giannina 1; Olympiakos 2 Panathinaikos 0.

GREECE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	12	9	3	0	21	6	30
Panathinaikos	12	9	2	1	21	8	29
PAOK	12	6	3	3	16	8	21
Panionios	12	5	3	4	16	13	18
Kavala	12	5	3	4	13	10	18
AEK	12	5	3	4	15	13	18
Ergotelis	11	4	5	2	17	12	17
Asteras	12	4	4	4	14	14	16
Aris	12	3	7	2	12	13	16
Xanthi	12	4	2	6	7	10	14
Atromitos	12	3	4	5	13	13	13
Larisa	11	3	4	4	12	16	13
Iraklis	12	3	3	6	10	15	12
Giannina	12	2	5	5	11	17	11
Levadiakos	12	3	2	7	8	18	11
Panthrakikos	12	0	1	11	7	27	1

HOLLAND

Nov 6: Groningen 4 Heracles 1.
Nov 7: Vitesse 2 VVV 0; Sparta 1 Roda JC 2; NEC 0 RKC 1.
Nov 8: NAC 4 Willem II 0; Den Haag 1 PSV 5; AZ 1 Feyenoord 1; Utrecht 2 Heerenveen 3; Twente 1 Ajax 0.
Nov 21: Roda JC 2 AZ 4; NAC 3 NEC 3; RKC 3 Groningen 1; Twente 1 Vitesse 0.
Nov 22: Feyenoord 0 Utrecht 0; Ajax 5 Heerenveen 1; Willem II 1 Den Haag 1; VVV 5 Sparta 0; PSV 4 Heracles 0.
Nov 27: Sparta 2 PSV 3.
Nov 28: AZ 2 VVV 0; Heracles 3 Roda JC 2; Heerenveen 3 RKC 1; Willem II 1 Twente 3.
Nov 29: Vitesse 1 Ajax 5; Den Haag 0 Feyenoord 2; Utrecht 3 NAC 1; Groningen 2 NEC 2.

HOLLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Twente	15	13	2	0	31	11	41
PSV	15	12	3	0	40	13	39
Ajax	15	11	2	2	50	13	35
Feyenoord	15	8	4	3	23	14	28
Utrecht	15	7	5	3	19	14	26
AZ	15	8	1	6	28	18	25
Heracles	15	7	2	6	18	22	23
NAC	15	6	3	6	21	23	21
Heerenveen	15	5	2	8	16	25	17
Sparta	15	5	2	8	14	25	17
VVV	15	2	8	5	20	24	14
Groningen	15	3	5	7	15	23	14
Willem II	15	4	2	9	18	28	14
Vitesse	15	4	2	9	16	27	14
NEC	15	2	7	6	16	24	13
Den Haag	15	3	4	8	16	27	13
Roda JC	15	3	4	8	19	31	13
RKC	15	3	0	12	12	30	9

HUNGARY

Oct 31: Ferencvaros 0 Diosgyor 3 (awarded).
Nov 4: Ferencvaros 1 Gyor 0.
Nov 6: Ujpest 0 Fehervar 1.
Nov 7: Zalaegerszeg 4 Vasas 1; Honved 1 Paks 1; Diosgyor 1 Kaposvar 3; Szombathely 2 Nyiregyhaza 0; Kecskemet 2 MTK 5; Papa 0 Ferencvaros 1.
Nov 8: Gyor 1 Debrecen 0.
Nov 13: Ferencvaros 0 Honved 0.
Nov 17: Debrecen 1 Kecskemet 0.
Nov 20: Honved 1 Debrecen 2.
Nov 21: Fehervar 0 Gyor 0; Nyiregyhaza 0 Zalaegerszeg 4; Paks 2 Szombathely 0; MTK 4 Diosgyor 0; Vasas 1 Ujpest 2.
Nov 22: Kaposvar 3 Papa 1.
Nov 29: Debrecen 5 Zalaegerszeg 3.

HUNGARY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fehervar	15	10	3	2	36	19	33
Ujpest	15	8	2	4	25	18	28
Debrecen	14	9	1	4	27	20	28
Gyor	15	7	5	3	18	10	26
Zalaegerszeg	15	8	2	5	29	24	26
MTK	14	7	4	3	28	16	25
Papa	15	7	1	7	24	20	22
Kaposvar	15	6	4	5	23	21	22
Paks	15	5	5	5	16	18	20
Vasas	15	6	1	8	23	36	19
Ferencvaros	15	4	5	6	17	21	17
Szombathely	15	4	3	8	21	30	15
Honved	15	3	5	7	16	22	14
Kecskemet	15	4	2	9	27	35	14
Diosgyor	15	3	3	9	18	25	12
Nyiregyhaza	15	2	4	9	18	32	10

ICELAND

ICELANDIC CUP – Final

Oct 3 - Reykjavik
Fram 2 (Olason 73, Tillen pen 97)
Breidablik 2 (Finnbogason 60, pen 102)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 4,766.
Ref: Valgeirson
Breidablik 5-4 on pens

ISRAEL

Nov 7: Maccabi Tel Aviv 1 Maccabi Petach Tikva 1; Hapoel Petach Tikva 0 Ramat Gan 0; Hapoel Haifa 2 Acre 4; Bnei Yehuda 2 Ra'anana 1; Ahi Nazareth 1 Be'er Sheva 4; Netanya 3 Beitar 0.
Nov 8: Bnei Sakhnin 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 2.
Nov 9: Ashdod 0 Maccabi Haifa 1.
Nov 21: Maccabi Haifa 4 Ahi Nazareth 1; Hapoel Tel Aviv 7 Hapoel Petach Tikva 1; Ramat Gan 0 Bnei Yehuda 2; Maccabi Petach Tikva 1 Bnei Sakhnin 2; Netanya 0 Ashdod 1; Beitar 1 Acre 1.
Nov 22: Ra'anana 2 Hapoel Haifa 1.
Nov 23: Be'er Sheva 1 Maccabi Tel Aviv 3.
Nov 28: Bnei Sakhnin 1 Be'er Sheva 1; Ahi Nazareth 1 Netanya 3; Hapoel Petach Tikva 1 Maccabi Petach Tikva 1; Hapoel Haifa 1 Ramat Gan 1; Ashdod 2 Beitar 0; Bnei Yehuda 0 Hapoel Tel Aviv 1.
Nov 29: Acre 1 Ra'anana 1.
Nov 30: Maccabi Tel Aviv 1 Maccabi Haifa 0.

ISRAEL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maccabi Haifa	11	10	0	1	24	8	30
H Tel Aviv	11	7	3	1	25	8	24
M Tel Aviv	11	6	3	2	18	9	21
Bnei Yehuda	11	6	3	2	15	8	21
Ashdod	11	4	4	3	9	9	16
Beitar	11	4	3	4	14	13	15
Be'er Sheva	11	4	3	4	18	21	15
Hapoel Haifa	11	4	1	6	17	18	13
Netanya	11	3	3	5	14	14	12
M Petach Tikva	11	2	5	4	11	15	11
Ramat Gan	11	2	5	4	10	15	11
Acre	11	1	7	3	11	12	10
Bnei Sakhnin	11	2	4	5	9	14	10
Ra'anana	11	2	4	5	12	18	10
H Petach Tikva	11	2	4	5	9	21	10
Ahi Nazareth	11	3	0	8	11	26	9

ITALY

Saturday, November 7
Atalanta 2 (Valdes 51, Ceravolo 71)
Juventus 5 (Camoranesi 36, 37, Felipe Melo 55, Diego 84, Trezeguet 87) Att: 17,500

Catania 0
Napoli 0 Att: 14,000

Sunday, November 8
Bari 1 (Allegretti 6)
Livorno 0 Att: 15,759

Bologna 3 (Zalayeta 42, 49, Di Vaio 90)
Palermo 1 (Kjaer 45) Att: 14,096

Cagliari 2 (Conti 85, Matri 89)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 15,000

Genoa 4 (Crespo 2, 18, Palladino 35, Floccari 90)
Siena 2 (Paolucci 80, Maccarone 82) Att: 26,000

Inter 1 (Eto'o 48)
Roma 1 (Vucinic 13) Att: 56,807

Lazio 1 (Thiago Silva og 64)
Milan 2 (Thiago Silva 21, Alexandre Pato 35) Att: 38,207

Parma 2 (Zaccardo 41, Lanzafame 72)
Chievo 0 Att: 14,793

Udinese 0
Fiorentina 1 (Vargas 84) Att: 15,000

Saturday, November 21
Bologna 1 (Zalayeta 23)
Inter 3 (Milito 22, Balotelli 41, Cambiasso 72) Att: 32,000

Fiorentina 2 (Gilardino 25, 62)
Parma 3 (Amoruso 30, Bozhinov 52, Lanzafame 67) Att: 25,068

Sunday, November 22
Juventus 1 (Grosso 51)
Udinese 0 Att: 23,609

Livorno 2 (Lucarelli 21, Pulzetti 90)
Genoa 1 (Criscito 63) Att: 11,153

Milan 4 (Seedorf 5, Borriello 38, Alexandre Pato 40, Ronaldinho pen 62)
Cagliari 3 (Matri 9, Lazzari 30, Nene 69) Att: 39,821

Napoli 0
Lazio 0 Att: 46,524

Palermo 1 (Migliaccio 4)
Catania 1 (Martinez 55) Att: 25,082

Roma 3 (Totti pen 6, 14, 28)
Bari 1 (Andreolli og 74) Att: 41,248

Sampdoria 2 (Rossi 19, Pazzini 65)
Chievo 1 (Mantovani 80) Att: 21,958

Siena 0
Atalanta 2 (Tiribocchi 52, Acquafresca pen 68) Att: 9,528

Saturday, November 28
Genoa 3 (Milanetto pen 10, Rossi 53, Palladino pen 75)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 33,165

Udinese 2 (Di Natale 29, Floro Flores 38)
Livorno 0 Att: 15,000

Sunday, November 29
Atalanta 1 (Ceravolo 13)
Roma 2 (Vucinic 44, Perrotta 64) Att: 10,752

Bari 2 (Masiello 78, Greco 90)
Siena 1 (Vergassola 3) Att: 15,445

Cagliari 2 (Nene 30, Matri 89)
Juventus 0 Att: 20,000

Catania 0
Milan 2 (Huntelaar 90, 90+) Att: 16,899

Chievo 1 (Abbruscato 54)
Palermo 0 Att: 8,373

Inter 1 (Milito pen 85)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 59,471

Lazio 0
Bologna 0 Att: 30,489

Parma 1 (Amoruso pen 86)
Napoli 1 (Denis 32) Att: 19,737

ITALY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	14	11	2	1	33	11	35
Milan	14	8	4	2	20	15	28
Juventus	14	8	3	3	26	15	27
Sampdoria	14	7	3	4	20	19	24
Parma	14	7	3	4	18	17	24
Genoa	14	7	2	5	26	24	23
Cagliari	14	7	1	6	21	16	22
Bari	14	5	6	3	14	11	21
Roma	14	6	3	5	24	22	21
Fiorentina	14	6	3	5	15	13	21
Napoli	14	5	5	4	18	19	20
Udinese	14	5	3	6	17	17	18
Chievo	14	5	3	6	16	16	18
Palermo	14	4	5	5	17	19	17
Lazio	14	2	7	5	9	14	13
Bologna	14	3	4	7	14	21	13
Atalanta	14	3	3	8	14	22	12
Livorno	14	3	3	8	6	16	12
Catania	14	1	6	7	12	21	9
Siena	14	1	3	10	12	24	6

LEADING GOALSCORERS

10	Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)
9	Diego Milito (Inter)
9	Francesco Totti (Roma)
8	Giampaolo Pazzini (Sampdoria)
7	Marek Hamsik (Napoli)

KAZAKHSTAN

Zubko Cup winner

Atyrau beat Shakhtyor Karagandy 1-0 with a goal from captain Denis Zubko to win the Kazakhstan Cup for the first time.

MONTENEGRO

Nine on the trot

Buducnost Podgorica set a national record with nine successive league wins following their 2-1 victory at home to Berane.

"It's always nice to be in the record books," said coach Mihailo Ivanovic. "But it won't mean much if we don't win the Montenegrin title."

The team, who are joint top of the table, lost two of their first five league games – a run which left Ivanovic threatening to resign "if Buducnost lose once more".

Painful debut...Kennedy is injured against Romania

SCOTLAND

Kennedy calls it a day

Celtic defender John Kennedy has retired as a result of injury problems dating back to his international debut for Scotland against Romania, in March 2004, when he damaged knee-ligaments.

Several attempts at a comeback since then have failed, leading to his decision to quit at the age of 26.

KAZAKHSTAN

KAZAKHSTAN – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aktobe	26	21	2	3	65	19	65
Lokomotiv	26	20	0	6	54	24	60
Shakhtyor	26	18	3	5	50	18	57
Tobyl	26	14	9	3	54	23	51
Zhetysu	26	13	5	8	33	26	44
Atyrau	26	11	7	8	37	29	40
Ordabasy	26	10	6	10	33	30	36
Taraz	26	9	6	11	37	36	33
Irtysh	26	8	5	13	24	31	29
Vostok*	26	7	5	14	32	56	23
Okzhetpes (R)	26	6	4	16	22	48	22
Kazakhmys* (R)	26	7	3	16	32	61	21
Kaisar (R)	26	3	5	18	15	45	14
Kyzylzhar** (R)	26	3	4	19	14	56	6

*3pts deducted **7pts deducted

Promoted: Kairat Almaty, Akzhayik Oral

LATVIA

Nov 5: Dinaburg 0 Skonto 3.
Nov 8: Daugava 2 Metalurgs 8; Tranzits 1 Jurmala 4; Skonto 3 Olimps/RFS 3; Dinaburg 0 Ventspills 3 (awarded).

Final standings – see page 92

MACEDONIA

Nov 4: Renova 4 Milano 0; Metalurg 1 Rabotnicki 1; Sloga 1 Pelister 3; Pobeda 1 Turnovo 0; Vardar 3 Sileks 1; Makedonija 1 Teteks 0.
Nov 7: Rabotnicki 5 Milano 1.
Nov 8: Turnovo 2 Sloga 0; Pelister 3 Metalurg 0; Sileks 0 Pobeda 1; Teteks 1 Vardar 0; Makedonija 0 Renova 1.
Nov 22: Renova 2 Rabotnicki 0; Metalurg 3 Turnovo 0; Milano 3 Pelister 0; Sloga 0 Sileks 3; Pobeda 2 Teteks 0; Vardar 3 Makedonija 0.
Nov 29: Vardar 1 Renova 1; Pelister 1 Rabotnicki 0; Sileks 0 Metalurg 1; Turnovo 3 Milano 1.

MACEDONIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Renova	15	11	3	1	32	11	36
Rabotnicki	15	9	4	2	30	12	31
Pelister	15	7	4	4	18	14	25
Turnovo	15	7	3	5	21	16	24
Makedonija	14	6	5	3	24	9	23
Metalurg	15	5	7	3	18	14	22
Sileks	15	5	4	6	18	21	19
Vardar	15	4	4	7	19	20	16
Pobeda*	14	5	4	5	18	19	16
Teteks	14	4	2	8	14	17	14
Sloga	14	3	2	9	10	24	11
Milano	15	1	0	14	8	53	3

*3pts deducted for not paying a debt to a former player

MOLDOVA

Nov 7: Nistru 0 Viitorul 2; Zimbru 1 Tiraspol 1; CSCA-Rapid 0 Dacia 2; Sfintul Gheorghe 0 Iskra-Stal 1; Dinamo 1 Olimpia 1.
Nov 10: Sheriff 1 Academia 0.
Nov 11: Iskra-Stal 1 Viitorul 0.
Nov 17: Academia 3 Sfintul Gheorghe 0.
Nov 18: Nistru 0 Dinamo 1; Viitorul 0 Zimbru 3; Dacia 1 Sheriff 2; Iskra-Stal 1 Olimpia 1; Tiraspol 0 CSCA-Rapid 0.
Nov 26: Academia 0 Sheriff 0.

MOLDOVA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dacia	19	13	3	3	38	13	42
Iskra-Stal	19	13	3	3	28	14	42
Sheriff	17	13	2	2	39	5	41
Olimpia	18	8	5	5	26	14	29
CSCA-Rapid	19	7	4	8	19	29	25
Zimbru	17	6	6	5	22	19	24
Tiraspol	19	5	7	7	14	17	22
Viitorul	19	6	4	9	15	25	22
Academia	19	5	6	8	19	26	21
Dinamo	19	5	2	12	22	41	17
S Gheorghe	18	4	2	12	16	30	14
Nistru	19	2	4	13	9	34	10

NORWAY

NORWEGIAN CUP – Final

Nov 8 - Oslo
Aalesund 2 (Roberts 54, Aaroy 115)
Molde 2 (M B Diouf 27, 96)
Aet. **HT:** 0-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 25,109.
Ref: Helgerud
Aalesund 5-4 on pens
Sent off: Carlsen (Aalesund) 51min

POLAND

Nov 6: Odra 1 Zaglebie 2; Wisla 0 Legia 1; Lechia 1 Korona 1.
Nov 7: Slask 2 Piast 1; Belchatow 1 Arka 0; Polonia Bytom 1 Lech 1; Polonia Warsaw 0 Cracovia 1.
Nov 8: Ruch 5 Jagiellonia 2.
Nov 20: Korona 3 Zaglebie 3; Polonia Bytom 1 Jagiellonia 1; Legia 1 Polonia Warsaw 1.
Nov 21: Piast 2 Arka 2; Lech 3 Ruch 1; Lechia 0 Belchatow 2; Slask 4 Odra 0.
Nov 22: Wisla 0 Cracovia 1.
Nov 25: Arka 1 Lechia 2.
Nov 27: Polonia Warsaw 1 Polonia Bytom 0; Zaglebie 0 Lech 1.
Nov 28: Cracovia 3 Piast 2; Belchatow 0 Legia 1; Jagiellonia 0 Lechia 0; Ruch 0 Korona 0.
Nov 29: Odra 1 Wisla 3; Arka 1 Slask 1.

POLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla	15	11	1	3	27	12	34
Legia	15	9	4	2	21	7	31
Ruch	15	9	2	4	20	12	29
Lech	15	8	4	3	24	15	28
Belchatow	15	8	3	4	17	11	27
Lechia	16	6	5	5	17	15	23
Polonia B	15	6	4	5	17	13	22
Slask	15	5	5	5	18	16	20
Cracovia	15	4	5	6	12	18	17
Arka	16	3	6	7	14	17	15
Piast	15	4	3	8	19	26	15
Korona	15	3	5	7	20	27	14
Polonia W	15	4	2	9	12	23	14
Zaglebie	15	3	4	8	12	25	13
Jagiellonia*	15	5	7	3	16	13	12
Odra	15	3	0	12	10	25	9

*10pts deducted for the club's involvement in a corruption scandal

PORTUGAL

Nov 6: Belenenses 0 Pacos Ferreira 3.
Nov 7: Setubal 0 Olhanense 0; Guimaraes 1 Sporting Braga 0.
Nov 8: Leixoes 2 Nacional 4; Uniao Leiria 1 Academica 1; Maritimo 1 Porto 0; Rio Ave 2 Sporting Lisbon 2.
Nov 9: Benfica 1 Naval 0.
Nov 27: Olhanense 0 Guimaraes 2.
Nov 28: Nacional 1 Naval 1; Sporting Lisbon 0 Benfica 0.
Nov 29: Pacos Ferreira 1 Leixoes 1; Academica 3 Setubal 0; Belenenses 2 Maritimo 2; Porto 2 Rio Ave 1.
Nov 30: Sporting Braga 2 Uniao Leiria 0.

PORTUGAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S Braga	11	9	1	1	17	5	28
Benfica	11	8	2	1	31	7	26
Porto	11	7	2	2	21	9	23
Nacional	11	5	3	3	15	18	18
Maritimo	11	4	4	3	16	13	16
Rio Ave	11	3	6	2	12	10	15
Sporting L	11	3	6	2	12	10	15
Uniao Leiria	11	3	3	3	14	11	14
Guimaraes	11	3	4	4	10	11	13
P Ferreira	11	2	5	4	10	12	11
Naval	11	3	2	6	8	16	11
Academica	11	2	4	5	13	15	10
Belenenses	11	1	6	4	7	15	9
Leixoes	11	2	3	6	10	20	9
Olhanense	11	1	5	5	5	12	8
Setubal	11	2	2	7	4	21	8

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Nov 6: Dundalk 1 Derry 2; St Patrick's 1 Shamrock 0; Sligo 3 Drogheda 1; Galway 2 Cork 2; Bray 1 Bohemians 1.

Final standings – see page 90

FAI CUP – Final

Nov 22 - Dublin
Sligo 1 (Doyle 57)
Sporting Fingal 2 (James pen 82, O'Neill 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,105. **Ref:** Kelly

ROMANIA

Nov 6: Pandurii 1 Gloria 1; International 0 Universitatea 1.
Nov 7: Gaz Metan 2 Politehnica 1; Ceahlaul 0 Vaslui 1; Brasov 0 Urziceni 0.
Nov 8: Otelul 3 Timisoara 3; CFR 1 Astra 0; Dinamo 1 Rapid 1.
Nov 9: Steaua 2 Alba Iulia 0.
Nov 20: Alba Iulia 3 Otelul 1; Rapid 4 Gaz Metan 1.
Nov 21: International 1 Urziceni 2.
Nov 22: Gloria 2 Brasov 1.
Nov 23: Universitatea 3 Ceahlaul 2; Astra 2 Steaua 1; Vaslui 2 CFR 0; Timisoara 2 Dinamo 0.
Nov 24: Politehnica 1 Pandurii 0.
Nov 29: Ceahlaul 2 International 2; CFR 2 Universitatea 0; Dinamo 2 Alba Iulia 0.
Nov 29: Steaua 2 Vaslui 1; Pandurii 1 Rapid 1; Gaz Metan 2 Timisoara 6.
Nov 30: Urziceni 2 Gloria 0; Brasov 2 Politehnica 0.

ROMANIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Timisoara	15	7	7	1	28	11	28
CFR	15	8	4	3	20	10	28
Steaua	15	8	4	3	20	11	28
Urziceni	15	8	4	3	20	11	28
Vaslui	15	9	1	5	23	17	28
Rapid	15	8	3	4	33	19	27
Dinamo	15	7	4	4	17	10	25
Brasov	15	6	6	3	17	8	24
Gaz Metan	15	5	4	6	18	26	19
Universitatea	15	5	2	8	23	24	17
Pandurii	15	4	5	6	12	16	17
Politehnica	15	5	2	8	15	23	17
Astra	14	4	4	6	16	19	16
International	15	5	1	9	14	27	16
Otelul	14	4	3	7	16	21	15
Alba Iulia	15	3	4	8	17	25	13
Gloria	15	2	6	7	12	23	12
Ceahlaul	15	2	4	8	11	30	10

RUSSIA

Nov 7: Khimki 1 Tom 3; Rostov 1 Saturn 2; Krylia Sovetov 2 Spartak Moscow 1; Kuban 3 FC Moscow 3.
Nov 8: CSKA 0 Rubin 2; Spartak Nalchik 2 Dynamo 4; Zenit 2 Terek 0; Lokomotiv 1 Amkar 0.
Nov 21: Terek 0 Kuban 1; Rubin 0 Zenit 0; Amkar 2 Khimki 0; Dynamo 0 Lokomotiv 2; Saturn 3 Krylia Sovetov 1; Spartak Moscow 2 CSKA 3; Tom 2 Rostov 1; FC Moscow 0 Spartak Nalchik 2.
Nov 29: Rostov 1 Amkar 1; Zenit 2 Spartak Moscow 1; Kuban 0 Rubin 3; FC Moscow 1 Dynamo 2; Khimki 1 Lokomotiv 3; Spartak Nalchik 4 Terek 2; CSKA 3 Saturn 0; Krylia Sovetov 1 Tom 3.

Final standings – see page 91

SCOTLAND

Nov 7: Hearts 0 Hibernian 0; Aberdeen 2 St Johnstone 1; Hamilton 2 Motherwell 2; Kilmarnock 0 Dundee United 2; Rangers 2 St Mirren 1.
Nov 8: Falkirk 3 Celtic 3.
Nov 21: Falkirk 2 Hamilton 0; Hearts 1 St Johnstone 2; Motherwell 1 Aberdeen 1; Rangers 3 Kilmarnock 0; St Mirren 1 Hibernian 1.
Nov 22: Dundee United 2 Celtic 1.
Nov 28: Aberdeen 1 Rangers 0; Celtic 3 St Mirren 1; Hibernian 2 Falkirk 0; Kilmarnock 1 Hearts 2; Motherwell 2 Dundee United 2; St Johnstone 1 Hamilton 1.

SCOTLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	13	8	3	2	27	14	27
Rangers	12	7	4	1	20	8	25
Hibernian	13	7	4	2	19	9	25
Dundee Utd	12	6	5	1	18	10	23
Motherwell	13	4	6	1	17	14	20
Aberdeen	13	4	6	3	11	11	18
Hearts	13	3	4	6	12	16	13
St Johnstone	13	3	4	6	20	25	13
St Mirren	13	3	4	6	15	20	13
Hamilton	13	2	4	7	11	22	10
Kilmarnock	13	2	3	8	9	19	9
Falkirk	13	1	5	7	10	21	8

SERBIA

Nov 7: Jagodina 2 Vojvodina 2; Rad 1 Spartak 3; Napredak 1 BSK 2; Smederevo 1 Cukaricki 0; Mladi Radnik 2 Borac 1; Red Star 1 Hajduk 0.
Nov 8: Metalac 0 Partizan 2; OFK 0 Javor 0.

Upset...Alcorcon (in yellow)

SPAIN

Madrid Cup shock

Despite beating Alcorcon 1-0 in the second leg of their Spanish Cup fourth-round tie, Real Madrid were dumped out of the competition 4-1 on aggregate by the third division side.

Rafael Van der Vaart scored the 81st-minute winner as Real were jeered from the pitch by a capacity crowd at the Santiago Bernabeu.

City rivals Atletico were also humbled by lower-division opposition as they lost 4-2 on aggregate to second division Rayo Vallecano.

Following their 3-2 La Liga defeat to Real Madrid, Atletico have now gone 10 years and 16 games without a win against their capital rivals.

Their last win against Real came in the 1998-99 season when they defeated them home and away 3-1.

Despite being near the foot of the table, this was their first home defeat this season.

TURKEY

Broos loses job

Trabzonspor sacked Belgian coach Hugo Broos after their 3-1 defeat at Kasimpasa. He was replaced by former Turkey boss Senol Gunes, who left South Korean side FC Seoul.

No thanks...Broos

Nov 21: Vojvodina 3 Borac 0; Javor 0 Mladi Radnik 0; Cukaricki 0 Red Star 3; Partizan 2 Smederevo 1; BSK 0 Metalac 0; Spartak 2 Napredak 0; Jagodina 1 Rad 0.
Nov 22: Hajduk 0 OFK 2.
Nov 28: Metalac 0 Spartak 0; Smederevo 1 BSK 1; Red Star 1 Partizan 2; OFK 4 Cukaricki 1; Mladi Radnik 1 Hajduk 3; Borac 1 Javor 0.
Nov 29: Rad 1 Vojvodina 0; Napredak 2 Jagodina 1.

SERBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star	13	11	1	1	23	4	34
Partizan	13	10	3	0	27	9	33
Vojvodina	13	7	3	3	21	7	24
OFK	13	7	3	3	17	8	24
Spartak	13	5	5	3	15	8	20
Jagodina	13	5	3	5	15	15	18
Smederevo	13	4	4	5	13	16	16
Borac	13	5	1	7	11	16	16
Javor	13	3	6	4	9	11	15
Mladi Radnik	13	3	5	5	8	16	14
Metalac	13	4	2	7	6	15	14
Hajduk	13	3	4	6	13	17	13
Napredak	13	3	4	6	11	17	13
BSK	13	3	4	6	9	17	13
Rad	13	2	5	6	11	17	11
Cukaricki	13	2	1	10	8	24	7

SLOVAKIA

Nov 7: Senica 0 Spartak 0; Dukla 2 Tatran 1; DAC 1 Dubnica 1; Nitra 1 Petrzalka 3; Slovan 0 Ruzomberok 2.
Nov 9: Zilina 4 Kosice 1.
Nov 21: Ruzomberok 0 Zilina 3; Kosice 1 Spartak 4; DAC 1 Senica 2; Dubnica 1 Dukla 2; Tatran 3 Nitra 1.
Nov 22: Petrzalka 0 Slovan 2.
Nov 28: Senica 2 Kosice 2; Spartak 3 Ruzomberok 1; Dukla 2 DAC 0; Slovan 3 Tatran 1; Zilina 2 Petrzalka 0.
Nov 29: Nitra 0 Dubnica 1.

SLOVAKIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zilina	18	13	2	3	27	8	41
Slovan	18	11	4	3	29	14	37
Dukla	18	10	6	2	27	13	36
Nitra	18	8	3	7	19	15	27
Senica	18	7	5	6	16	22	26
Spartak	18	7	4	7	26	21	25
Tatran	18	6	3	9	16	18	21
DAC	18	5	6	7	16	19	21
Ruzomberok	18	5	5	8	16	23	20
Petrzalka	18	5	4	9	20	22	19
Dubnica	18	4	5	9	13	25	17
Kosice	18	2	3	13	15	40	9

SLOVENIA

Nov 7: Koper 0 Domzale 1; Interblock 3 Rudar 1; Gorica 3 Nafta 1; Celje 1 Olimpija 1.
Nov 8: Drava 0 Maribor 2.
Nov 21: Nafta 3 Koper 1; Olimpija 3 Drava 0; Rudar 0 Gorica 3.
Nov 22: Domzale 1 Celje 5.
Nov 28: Domzale 2 Drava 0; Olimpija 2 Interblock 0; Maribor 3 Gorica 1; Rudar 0 Nafta 1.

SLOVENIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Koper	18	10	5	3	26	18	35
Olimpija*	19	10	2	7	29	17	30
Maribor	18	9	2	7	32	25	29
Rudar	19	9	2	8	28	28	29
Celje	18	7	5	6	29	28	26
Domzale	19	7	5	7	26	33	26
Nafta	19	7	4	8	30	33	25
Interblock	18	6	3	9	23	25	21
Gorica	19	5	5	9	29	32	20
Drava	19	4	5	10	18	30	17

*2pts deducted for missing a game last season

SPAIN

Saturday, November 7
Atletico Madrid 2 (Forlan 79, Aguero 81)
Real Madrid 3 (Kaka 5, Marcelo 25, Higuain 64)
Att: 55,000

Barcelona 4 (Pedro 11, 40, Henry 44, Messi pen 87)
Mallorca 2 (Nunes 20, Keita 90) Att: 77,491

Getafe 0
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Mista 13, Filipe 58) Att: 12,000

Tenerife 2 (Martinez 18, Alfaro 27)
Malaga 2 (Edinho 29, Javi Lopez 77) Att: 16,800

Sunday, November 8
Almeria 2 (Josebxo og 2, Uche 90)
Osasuna 0 Att: 10,260

Racing Santander 0
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Gurpegui 31, Iraola pen 75) Att: 14,412

Sevilla 3 (Luis Fabiano 9, 61, Kanoute 66)
Villarreal 2 (Pires 29, David Fuster 59) Att: 40,000

Sporting Gijon 1 (Billic 3)
Espanyol 0 Att: 17,000

Valencia 3 (Mata 17, Villa 40, Pablo Hernandez 42)
Zaragoza 1 (Abel Aguilar 65) Att: 35,000

Valladolid 0
Xerez 0 Att: 16,321

Saturday, November 21
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Toquero 63)
Barcelona 1 (Daniel Alves 54) Att: 39,500

Dep La Coruna 2 (Colotto 21, Guardado pen 90)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Aguero 3) Att: 17,000

Real Madrid 1 (Higuain 22)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 75,000

Tenerife 1 (Nino 75)
Sevilla 2 (Perotti 32, Renato 48) Att: 20,551

Sunday, November 22
Espanyol 0
Getafe 2 (Casquero 79, Pedro Rios 90)

Malaga 1 (Ivan Gonzalez 74)
Zaragoza 1 (Ewerthon pen 49) Att: 25,000

Mallorca 3 (Castro 48, 90, Victor 89)
Almeria 1 (David Rodriguez 77) Att: 11,000

Osasuna 1 (Shojaei 68)
Valencia 3 (Villa 12, Albelda 20, Marchena 56) Att: 17,401

Villarreal 3 (Nilmar 7, 48, Rossi 57)
Valladolid 1 (Diego Costa 60) Att: 18,000

Xerez 0
Sporting Gijon 0 Att: 16,000

Saturday, November 28
Sevilla 2 (Luis Fabiano 58, 72)
Malaga 2 (Fernando 22, Duda 45) Att: 40,000

Sporting Gijon 1 (Billic 75)
Villarreal 0 Att: 17,000

Valencia 1 (Villa 48)
Mallorca 1 (Borja Valero pen 85) Att: 40,000

Sunday, November 29
Almeria 1 (Uche pen 84)
Athletic Bilbao 4 (Javi Martinez 37, Usturitz 41, Llorente 60, De Marcos 77) Att: 8,858

At Madrid 4 (Forlan 27, Aguero 62, 85, Rodriguez 89)
Espanyol 0 Att: 25,000

Barcelona 1 (Ibrahimovic 56)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 98,000

Getafe 5 (Soldado 44, pen 45, 58, Parejo 57, Casquero 60)
Xerez 1 (Aythami 33) Att: 11,000

Racing Santander 0
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Lopo 76) Att: 12,000

Valladolid 3 (Diego Costa 28, 50, Canobbio pen 35)
Tenerife 3 (Nino 63, Angel 71, Luna 85) Att: 12,788

Zaragoza 0
Osasuna 1 (Nekounam 27) Att: 24,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	12	9	3	0	30	8	30
Real Madrid	12	9	1	2	27	9	28
Sevilla	12	8	2	2	23	10	26
Valencia	12	7	4	1	23	12	25
Dep Coruna	12	8	1	3	17	12	25
Mallorca	12	6	3	3	22	15	21
Sporting Gijon	12	5	5	2	13	10	20
Ath Bilbao	12	6	2	4	16	15	20
Getafe	12	6	0	6	19	17	18
Osasuna	12	4	3	5	13	15	15
Espanyol	12	3	4	5	8	16	13
Villarreal	12	3	3	6	17	16	12
Almeria	12	3	3	6	12	19	12
Zaragoza	12	3	3	6	15	23	12
Valladolid	12	2	5	5	18	23	11
Tenerife	12	3	2	7	11	24	11
At Madrid	12	2	4	6	17	24	10
Malaga	12	1	4	7	13	18	7
R Santander	12	1	4	7	10	21	7
Xerez	12	1	4	7	4	21	7

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 David Villa (Valencia)
8 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Barcelona)
7 Luis Fabiano (Sevilla)
7 Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
7 Roberto Soldado (Getafe)

SWEDEN

SWEDISH CUP – Final

Nov 7 - Stockholm
AIK Stockholm 2 (Obolo 72, Antonio Flavio 90)
IFK Gothenburg 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 24,365. **Ref:** Eriksson

SWITZERLAND

Nov 7: Aarau 0 St Gallen 2; Grasshopper 7 Bellinzona 0.
Nov 8: Lucerne 1 Zurich 0; Sion 3 Young Boys 1.
Nov 9: Basle 4 Xamax 1.
Nov 28: St Gallen 1 Lucerne 1; Xamax 0 Grasshopper 1.
Nov 29: Young Boys 2 Basle 0; Zurich 2 Aarau 0; Bellinzona 3 Sion 1.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Young Boys	17	12	2	3	42	20	38
Basle	17	9	4	4	38	25	31
Xamax	17	7	5	5	34	24	26
Lucerne	17	7	5	5	27	26	26
Grasshopper	17	7	2	8	30	24	23
Zurich	17	6	5	6	31	28	23
St Gallen	17	6	5	6	25	24	23
Sion	17	6	5	6	27	30	23
Bellinzona	17	4	3	10	23	48	15
Aarau	17	1	4	12	11	39	7

TURKEY

Nov 6: Bursaspor 1 Genclerbirligi 2.
Nov 7: Istanbul BB 1 Antalyaspor 0; Trabzonspor 0 Besiktas 2.
Nov 8: Ankaragucu 2 Kasimpasa 2; Eskisehirspor 2 Denizlispor 0; Manisaspor 0 Gaziantepspor 3; Sivasspor 2 Kayserispor 4; Fenerbahce 3 Ankaraspor 0 (awarded); Diyarbakirspor 1 Galatasaray 2.
Nov 21: Gaziantepspor 0 Bursaspor 1; Besiktas 3 Fenerbahce 0.
Nov 22: Kayserispor 2 Diyarbakirspor 0; Genclerbirligi 3 Istanbul BB 1; Eskisehirspor 0 Ankaragucu 0; Denizlispor 1 Antalyaspor 1; Kasimpasa 3 Trabzonspor 1; Ankaraspor 0 Sivasspor 3 (awarded); Galatasaray 1 Manisaspor 1.
Nov 27: Bursaspor 1 Galatasaray 0.
Nov 28: Fenerbahce 1 Kasimpasa 3.
Nov 29: Antalyaspor 2 Genclerbirligi 0; Istanbul BB 1 Gaziantepspor 1; Ankaragucu 1 Denizlispor 0; Manisaspor 0 Kayserispor 1; Trabzonspor 2 Eskisehirspor 1; Diyarbakirspor 3 Ankaraspor 0 (awarded); Sivasspor 0 Besiktas 1.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	14	10	1	3	26	13	31
Besiktas	14	9	3	2	17	6	30
Bursaspor	14	9	2	3	28	12	29
Galatasaray	14	9	2	3	31	18	29
Kayserispor	14	8	4	2	22	10	28
Genclerbirligi	14	6	4	4	20	15	22
Istanbul BB	14	6	4	4	16	22	22
Trabzonspor	14	6	3	5	26	20	21
Eskisehirspor	14	5	6	3	18	13	21
Antalyaspor	14	6	2	6	19	16	20
Gaziantepspor	14	5	4	5	18	17	19
Ankaragucu	14	4	5	5	18	16	17
Kasimpasa	14	4	3	7	19	23	15
Diyarbakirspor	14	4	3	7	15	23	15
Manisaspor	14	3	5	6	11	15	14
Sivasspor	14	3	1	10	14	24	10
Denizlispor	14	1	4	9	10	23	7
Ankaraspor	14	0	0	14	0	42	0

**Ankaraspor expelled from league for having "anti-competitive" links with Ankaragucu; all fixtures awarded as 3-0 wins to their opponents*

Out...Boca's Nicolas Gaitan (left)

ARGENTINA

Big two miss out

Boca Juniors' 3-0 loss to San Lorenzo and River Plate's 1-1 draw with Estudiantes means that, for the first time since 1992, neither of the Buenos Aires duo will take part in the Libertadores Cup.

Tigre midfielder Matias Gimenez has said he will not play for the club again after being threatened by his own team's fans, who accused him of not trying hard enough.

"I took the decision for the security of my family," explained the 26-year-old. "I have two children who really are worth more than a ball."

BRAZIL

Disgraced duo axed

Palmeiras have declared that striker Obina and defender Mauricio will never play for the club again after being sent off for fighting at half-time in the 2-0 defeat at Gremio.

The pair, who were pulled apart by team-mates as they traded blows, had argued after Rafael Marques scored in stoppage time at the end of the first half and were both shown the red card, leaving Palmeiras two men short for the entire second period.

Corinthians, Cruzeiro, Avai, Goias and Atletico

Scrap...Mauricio

UKRAINE

Nov 21: Dynamo 3 Shakhtar 0; Vorskla 3 Obolon 2; Tavriya 3 Zakarpattya 2; Metalurh Donetsk 3 Arsenal 0; Metalist 2 Zorya 0.
Nov 22: Chornomorets 0 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0; Kryvbas 1 Karpaty 2; Illichivets 0 Dnipro 3.
Nov 28: Zakarpattya 3 Kryvbas 0; Shakhtar 3 Tavriya 0; Dnipro 2 Vorskla 2; Karpaty 2 Illichivets 2.
Nov 29: Arsenal 1 Metalist 2; Zorya 0 Chornomorets 1; Obolon 2 Metalurh Donetsk 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Dynamo 0.

UKRAINE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	14	11	3	0	34	7	36
Metalist	14	10	2	2	18	6	32
Shakhtar	14	9	4	1	34	13	31
Dnipro	14	7	4	3	21	11	25
Metalurh D	14	7	3	4	24	15	24
Tavriya	14	6	5	3	17	19	23
Karpaty	14	5	6	3	24	20	21
Vorskla	14	3	7	4	15	14	16
Arsenal	14	4	4	6	19	21	16
Metalurh Z	14	4	4	6	17	21	16
Illichivets	14	4	3	7	16	24	15
Obolon	14	5	0	9	14	28	15
Chornomorets	14	3	3	8	9	20	12
Zorya	14	3	2	9	9	25	11
Zakarpattya	14	3	1	10	11	25	10
Kryvbas	14	2	1	11	14	27	7

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Quarter-finals, 2nd legs

Nov 4
Botafogo (Bra) 1 (Andre Lima 73)
Cerro Porteno (Par) 3 (Nunez 56, Irrazabal 87, Caceres 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Sent off: Alessandro (Botafogo) 76min
Cerro Porteno 5-2 on agg

Nov 4
San Lorenzo (Arg) 0
River Plate (Uru) 1 (Porta 46)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Buckley (Per)
Agg 1-1. River Plate 7-6 on pens

Nov 5
LDU Quito (Ecu) 2 (Vera 67, Espinola 74)
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 1 (Lopez 43)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
LDU 3-2 on agg

Nov 5
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 0
Fluminense (Bra) 1 (Fred 60)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Laverni (Arg)
Fluminense 3-2 on agg

Semi-finals, 1st legs

Nov 11
Cerro Porteno 0
Fluminense 1 (Fred 75)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)

Nov 12
River Plate (Uru) 2 (Porta 8, Cordoba 60)
LDU Quito 1 (Mendez 33)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)

Semi-finals, 2nd legs

Nov 18
Fluminense 2 (Gum 90, Alan 90+)
Cerro Porteno 1 (Caceres 6)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Fluminense 3-1 on agg

Nov 19
LDU Quito 7 (Bieler pen 17, 82, 88, Espinola 27, Bolanos 45, Mendez 57, De la Cruz 77)
River Plate (Uru) 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
LDU 8-2 on agg

Final, 1st leg

Nov 25
LDU Quito 5 (Mendez 21, 44, 60, Salas 77, De la Cruz 88)
Fluminense 1 (Marquinhos 1)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
LDU: Dominguez - De la Cruz, Reasco, Espinola, N Araujo, Mendez (Chila 84), Bolanos (Salas 68), W Araujo, D Calderon, Bieler, W Calderon (Graf 68).
Fluminense: Da Silva - Cassio, Gum, Neto, Marquinhos, Diogo, Dario Conca, Diequinho (Mauricio 59), Mariano (Ruy 71), Fred, Alan (Kleza 46).

LIBERTADORES CUP

Draw

Preliminary round
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) v Paraguay 3rd reps (1)
Peru 3rd reps v Mexico 3rd reps (2)
Argentina 5th reps v Chile 3rd reps (3)
Bolivia 3rd reps v Brazil 5th reps (4)
Argentina 6th reps v Ecuador 3rd reps (5)
Colombia 3rd reps v Racing (Uru) (6)
1st legs - January 27; 2nd legs - February 3

Group 1
Cerro Porteno (Par), Corinthians (Bra), Colombia 2nd reps, winners prelim rnd game 6

Group 2
Once Caldas (Col), Brazil 4th reps, Mexico 2nd reps, Paraguay 2nd reps

Group 3
Bolivar (Bol), Estudiantes (Arg), Peru 2nd reps, winners prelim rnd game 2

Group 4
Blooming (Bol), Argentina 4th reps, Peru 1st reps, winners prelim rnd game 1

Group 5
Cerro (Uru), Brazil 3rd reps, Ecuador 1st reps, winners prelim rnd game 5

Group 6
Morelia (Mex), Nacional (Uru), Argentina 3rd reps, Ecuador 2nd reps

Group 7
Deportivo Italia (Ven), Velez Sarsfield (Arg), Chile 2nd reps, winners prelim rnd game 4

Group 8
Caracas (Ven), Universidad de Chile (Chl), Brazil 2nd reps, winners prelim rnd game 3

Games to be played February 10-April 21

Group winners and the best six runners-up qualify for 1st knockout round, to which Guadalajara (Mex) and San Luis (Mex) received byes

ARGENTINA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Tuesday, November 3
Colon 3 (Nieto 73, 80, 81)
Huracan 0

Friday, November 6
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Pavlovich 42)
Rosario Central 1 (Zelaya 16)

Independiente 1 (Tuzzio 87)
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Saturday, November 7
Atletico Tucuman 4 (Pereyra 17, 58, Blanco og 55, Gigliotti 81)
Tigre 2 (Gimenez 5, Luna 47)

Godoy Cruz 3 (Vera 3, Higuain pen 13, Chavez 90)
Racing Club 1 (Sigali og 57)

Lanus 0
Chacarita Juniors 3 (Milia 38, Parra 52, 72)

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Boghossian 4, 79)
River Plate 1 (Buonanotte 64)

Sunday, November 8
Boca Juniors 0
Colon 0

Estudiantes 3 (Desabato 33, Boselli 57, Benitez 83)
Velez Sarsfield 0

San Lorenzo 0
Banfield 1 (Fernandez 72)

Monday, November 9
Huracan 1 (Trecco 48)
Arsenal 1 (Galvan 90)

Wednesday, November 11
Rosario Central 3 (Veron og 7, Castillejos 45, Alayes og 68)
Estudiantes 0

Friday, November 13
Chacarita Juniors 0
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Zarif og 39)

Tigre 2 (Morel 19, Fondacaro 90)
Godoy Cruz 0

Saturday, November 14
Banfield 3 (Rodriguez 46, Garcia 49, 59)
Velez Sarsfield 0

Colon 2 (Fuertes pen 2, pen 65)
Argentinos Juniors 0

Sunday, November 15
Arsenal 1 (Alvarez 76)
Boca Juniors 1 (Medel 28)

River Plate 3 (Gallardo 70, Buonanotte 75, Villalva 77)
Atletico Tucuman 1 (Gigliotti 2)

San Lorenzo 0
Independiente 3 (Gandin 37, Gomez 76, Nunez 78)

Monday, November 16
Gimnasia La Plata 4 (Vizcarra 19, Romero 33, Perez 74, Stracqualursi 82)
Huracan 1 (Rodriguez 32)

Racing Club 1 (Luguercio 5)
Estudiantes 0

Rosario Central 0
Lanus 0

Friday, November 20
Estudiantes 3 (Boselli 4, 60, Re 54)
Tigre 1 (Cellay og 58)

Lanus 3 (Menendez 42, Blanco 50, Salcedo pen 54)
Colon 0

Saturday, November 21
Atletico Tucuman 2 (Longo 45, Escobar 74)
Chacarita Juniors 1 (Centurion 43)

Huracan 0
San Lorenzo 2 (Civelli 9, Torres 90)

Independiente 1 (Gandin 49)
Banfield 2 (Mareque og 52, Silva 77)

Sunday, November 22
Boca Juniors 4 (Medel 17, Insua 43, 68, Gaitan 83)
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Godoy Cruz 1 (Rojas 47)
River Plate 1 (Rosales 4)

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Boghossian 15, Achucarro 28)
Rosario Central 2 (Nunez 12, Chitzoff 13)

Monday, November 23
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Hauche 22)
Arsenal 1 (Silva 81)

Velez Sarsfield 4 (Caruso 30, Cabrera 36, Lopez 55, Cabral 74)
Racing Club 2 (Diaz og 25, Grazzini 81)

Wednesday, November 25
Estudiantes 0
Colon 1 (Nieto 90)

Friday, November 27
Independiente 2 (Galeano 47, Gandin 88)
Huracan 0

Rosario Central 1 (Burdisso 8)
Atletico Tucuman 1 (Escobar 77)

Saturday, November 28
Chacarita Juniors 2 (Alustiza 26, Morales 90)
Godoy Cruz 1 (Rojas 76)

River Plate 1 (Ortega 90)
Estudiantes 1 (Desabato 32)

Sunday, November 29
Banfield 1 (Silva 16)
Racing Club 2 (Martinez 8, Mercado 64)

San Lorenzo 3 (Aguirre 9, 20, Bordagaray 53)
Boca Juniors 0

Tigre 0
Velez Sarsfield 3 (Ponce 27, 90, Papa 84)

Monday, November 30
Arsenal 2 (Galvan 5, Yacuzzi 61)
Lanus 5 (Blanco 33, Menendez 64, Bigilieri 83, Salcedo pen 88, Pellettieri 90)

Mineiro are the only top-flight teams with the same coach who started the championship following the departure of Gremio's Paulo Autuori for Al Rayyan of Qatar.

CHILE

Basualdo says bye

Coach Jose Basualdo left Universidad de Chile after they failed to reach the closing-championship's knockout phase for the first time since its introduction in 2002.

Rangers were docked three points and subsequently relegated after they fielded one foreign player too many in the second half of their 1-0 defeat at Cobreloa.

One of the teams replacing Rangers in the top flight will be Union San Felipe who, in addition to gaining promotion, also beat Municipal Iquique 3-0 in the Chilean Cup Final.

On his way...Basualdo

ECUADOR

LDU in driving seat

LDU Quito came from a goal behind to beat Fluminense 5-1 in the first leg of the Sudamericana Cup Final.

Marquinhos had put the Brazilians ahead, but goals from Edison Mendez (three), Franklin Salas and Ulises De la Cruz gave Jorge Fossati's side a convincing advantage ahead of the return in Rio de Janiero.

Hat-trick hero...Mendez

Colon 0
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Boghossian 65)

Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Vizcarra 60)
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Hauche 64, Prosperi 80)

ARGENTINA – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Newell's	16	11	3	2	23	11	36
Banfield	16	10	5	1	23	9	35
Colon	17	9	4	4	26	14	31
Estudiantes	18	9	3	6	28	19	30
Velez	16	9	3	4	25	18	30
Independiente	16	8	2	5	27	16	29
San Lorenzo	16	8	5	3	25	17	29
Rosario	17	7	6	4	18	12	27
Argentinos Jrs	16	6	7	3	21	17	25
Lanus	16	6	6	4	23	17	24
Boca Juniors	16	6	5	5	26	22	23
Arsenal	16	5	5	6	16	23	20
At Tucuman	16	4	4	8	21	30	16
River Plate	16	3	6	7	18	23	15
Racing Club	16	3	5	8	16	22	14
Godoy Cruz	16	3	5	8	17	26	14
Chacarita Jrs	16	4	2	10	16	25	14
Gimnasia LP	16	3	4	9	16	24	13
Huracan	16	2	4	10	11	28	10
Tigre	16	2	2	12	18	38	8

LEADING GOALSCORERS

13 Santiago Silva (Banfield)
11 Federico Nieto (Colon)
9 Joaquin Boghossian (Newell's Old Boys)
9 Mauro Boselli (Estudiantes)
9 Dario Gandin (Independiente)

BRAZIL

Nov 4: Gremio 1 Sao Paulo 1.
Nov 7: Vitoria 0 Aval 1; Santos 3 Nautico 1; Sport Recife 2 Cruzeiro 3.
Nov 8: Fluminense 1 Palmeiras 0; Atletico Mineiro 1 Flamengo 3; Corinthians 2 Santo Andre 0; Atletico Paranaense 2 Goias 0; Barueri 1 Internacional 1; Botafogo 2 Coritiba 0.
Nov 11: Palmeiras 2 Sport Recife 2.
Nov 14: Cruzeiro 1 Gremio 1; Sao Paulo 2 Vitoria 0; Coritiba 2 Atletico Mineiro 1.
Nov 15: Barueri 3 Botafogo 0; Nautico 0 Flamengo 2; Avai 3 Corinthians 1; Fluminense 2 Atletico Paranaense 1; Goias 3 Santo Andre 1; Internacional 3 Santos 1.
Nov 18: Gremio 2 Palmeiras 0.
Nov 21: Corinthians 2 Nautico 3; Atletico Paranaense 1 Cruzeiro 1.
Nov 22: Santos 4 Coritiba 0; Botafogo 3 Sao Paulo 2; Sport Recife 0 Fluminense 3; Santo Andre 4 Avai 2; Vitoria 2 Barueri 1; Flamengo 0 Goias 0; Atletico Mineiro 0 Internacional 1.
Nov 29: Corinthians 0 Flamengo 2; Palmeiras 3 Atletico Mineiro 1; Santo Andre 5 Nautico 3; Atletico Paranaense 2 Botafogo 0; Gremio 4 Barueri 2; Fluminense 4 Vitoria 0; Goias 4 Sao Paulo 2; Sport Recife 1 Internacional 2; Cruzeiro 4 Coritiba 1; Avai 2 Santos 2.

BRAZIL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Flamengo	37	18	10	9	56	43	64
Internacional	37	18	8	11	61	43	62
Palmeiras	37	17	11	9	57	43	62
Sao Paulo	37	17	11	9	53	42	62
Cruzeiro	37	17	8	12	56	52	59
At Mineiro	37	16	8	13	55	53	56
Gremio	37	15	10	12	66	44	55
Goias	37	15	9	13	62	63	54
Avai	37	14	12	11	60	52	54
Corinthians	37	13	10	14	47	54	49
Santos	37	12	13	12	57	56	49
Barueri	37	12	12	13	56	52	48
Vitoria	37	13	6	16	49	55	47
At Paranaense	37	13	8	16	42	49	47
Fluminense	37	11	12	14	48	55	45
Coritiba	37	12	6	17	47	58	44
Botafogo	37	10	14	13	50	57	44
Santo Andre	37	11	8	18	45	57	41
Nautico	37	10	8	19	48	70	38
Sport Recife	37	7	10	20	48	67	31

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP
League stage

Nov 5: Santiago Morning 1 O'Higgins 1.
Nov 7: Colo Colo 1 Palestino 2; Univ Catolica 4 Univ de Concepcion 1.
Nov 8: Cobreloa 1 Rangers 0; Curico Unido 2 Everton 2; Audax Italiano 0 Cobresal 0; Nublense 1 Union Espanola 1; Dep La Serena 2 Municipal 1; Huachipato 1 Univ de Chile 0.

CHILE – CLOSING – LEAGUE STAGE – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ Catolica	17	11	5	1	43	13	38
Dep La Serena	17	11	0	6	31	19	33
Audax Italiano	17	9	5	3	26	22	32
Colo Colo	17	8	4	5	28	19	28
U Concepcion	17	8	3	6	23	22	27
S Morning	17	6	2	7	22	25	26
U Espanola	17	7	4	6	30	30	25
Everton	17	7	4	6	18	20	25
Rangers	17	7	3	7	26	27	24
Univ de Chile	17	5	6	6	23	24	21
Cobresal	17	5	5	7	18	17	20
Palestino	17	5	5	7	16	20	20
Cobreloa	17	6	1	10	21	22	19
Nublense	17	5	4	8	16	22	19
O'Higgins	17	4	7	6	17	23	19
Huachipato	17	5	2	10	20	29	17
Curico Unido*	17	4	6	5	15	25	17
Municipal	17	1	6	10	21	36	9

Top eight qualified for quarter-finals
**3pts deducted for using an ineligible player*

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Nov 21/22; 2nd legs - Nov 24/25
Everton v Univ Catolica
0-2, 0-0 (agg 0-2)
Santiago Morning v Audax Italiano
4-2, 1-2 (agg 5-4)
Union Espanola v Dep La Serena
1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Univ de Concepcion v Colo Colo
1-2, 3-4 (agg 4-6)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Nov 28/29
Colo Colo 1 Dep La Serena 0
Santiago Morning 0 Univ Catolica 3

2nd legs - Dec 2/3

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP
Regular season

Nov 7: At Nacional 0 Indep Medellin 0; Tolima 2 America 0.
Nov 8: Cartagena 4 At Huila 3; Dep Cali 4 Chico 2; Dep Pasto 0 Indep Santa Fe 1; Once Caldas 3 Envigado 3; Cucuta 0 Pereira 1; Quindio 1 At Junior 0; Millonarios 2 La Equidad 0.
Nov 14: Indep Medellin 2 Once Caldas 2; La Equidad 1 Cucuta 1.
Nov 15: At Huila 0 Quindio 0; At Junior 2 Tolima 1; America 1 Millonarios 1; Pereira 0 At Nacional 0; Envigado 3 Dep Pasto 4; Indep Santa Fe 4 Dep Cali 1; Chico 4 Cartagena 0.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING – REGULAR – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ind Medellin	16	12	2	4	29	18	38
Ind Santa Fe	18	8	6	4	31	24	30
At Huila	18	8	6	4	27	24	30
Pereira	18	7	8	3	21	9	29
Tolima	18	8	5	5	25	23	29
At Junior	18	8	3	7	35	25	27
At Nacional	18	6	9	3	21	19	27
Cartagena	18	7	6	5	30	30	27
Millonarios	18	6	8	4	24	20	26
Dep Pasto	18	7	5	6	24	25	26
Chico	18	6	6	6	32	31	24
Dep Cali	18	6	4	8	30	32	22
Quindio	18	6	3	9	22	31	21
Cucuta	18	4	6	8	16	17	18
La Equidad	18	2	11	5	17	24	17
Once Caldas	18	4	5	9	23	35	17
America	18	1	10	7	20	29	13
Envigado	18	1	7	10	32	43	10

Top eight qualified for play-offs

Play-offs

Group A
Nov 21: At Junior 2 Cartagena 0; Pereira 1 Indep Medellin 2.
Nov 25: Cartagena 2 Pereira 1; Indep Medellin 0 At Junior 0.
Nov 28: At Junior 2 Pereira 2.
Nov 29: Cartagena 2 Indep Medellin 4.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING – PLAY-OFFS – GP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ind Medellin	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
At Junior	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Cartagena	3	1	0	2	4	7	3
Pereira	3	0	1	2	4	6	1

Group B
Nov 22: At Nacional 2 Tolima 1; Indep Santa Fe 2 At Huila 0.
Nov 25: Tolima 1 Indep Santa Fe 2; At Huila 1 At Nacional 0.
Nov 28: Tolima 1 At Huila 1.
Nov 29: At Nacional 3 Indep Santa Fe 0.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING – PLAY-OFFS – GP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Ind Santa Fe	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
At Huila	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Tolima	3	0	1	2	3	5	1

ECUADOR

3rd stage
Group 1
Nov 7: Manta 0 Dep Quito 0.
Nov 8: LDU Quito 0 Macara 0.
Nov 15: Macara 0 Manta 0.
Nov 16: LDU Quito 0 Dep Quito 1.
Nov 22: Dep Quito 2 Macara 0; Manta 1 LDU Quito 0.

ECUADOR – 3RD STAGE – GROUP 1 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Quito	6	4	2	0	8	0	15 [1]
LDU Quito	6	1	3	2	4	2	9 [3]
Macara	6	1	3	2	2	3	7 [1]
Manta	6	1	2	3	1	10	5

Group 2
Nov 8: Emelec 2 Olmedo 1; Espoli 0 Dep Cuenca 1.
Nov 15: Emelec 1 Espoli 1; Olmedo 1 Dep Cuenca 2.
Nov 21: Espoli 2 Olmedo 3.
Nov 22: Dep Cuenca 1 Emelec 1.

ECUADOR – 3RD STAGE – GROUP 2 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Cuenca	6	5	1	0	8	3	16
Emelec	6	1	3	2	4	6	9 [3]
Olmedo	6	2	1	3	8	8	7
Espoli	6	0	3	3	3	6	3

Figure in brackets shows bonus points from 1st and 2nd stages

Group winners qualified for championship Final

Championship Final, 1st leg

Nov 29
Dep Cuenca 1 (Ianiero 76)
Dep Quito 1 (Pinchio 58)
Ref: Alarcon
Sent off: Paredes (Dep Cuenca) 62min; Minda (Dep Quito) 89min

PARAGUAY

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 6: Guarani 1 Rubio Nu 2.
Nov 7: Nacional 3 Tacuary 4; Olimpia 2 Sportivo Luqueno 1; 2 de Mayo 3 Sol de America 1.
Nov 8: Libertad 1 3 de Febrero 2; Cerro Porteno 3 12 de Octubre 2.
Nov 13: Libertad 1 Guarani 3; 3 de Febrero 2 Sol de America 1.
Nov 14: Rubio Nu 2 Tacuary 0; Sportivo Luqueno 2 2 de Mayo 1; 12 de Octubre 2 Nacional 0.
Nov 15: Olimpia 1 Cerro Porteno 2.
Nov 17: Nacional 1 Rubio Nu 0.
Nov 18: Olimpia 4 3 de Febrero 1; Tacuary 0 Sol de America 0; Guarani 2 Sportivo Luqueno 1; 2 de Mayo 3 12 de Octubre 0.
Nov 21: Sol de America 0 Nacional 3.
Nov 22: Rubio Nu 2 2 de Mayo 0; 12 de Octubre 2 Guarani 1; Sportivo Luqueno 1 Cerro Porteno 2; 3 de Febrero 1 Tacuary 2; Libertad 1 Olimpia 0.
Nov 25: Cerro Porteno 1 Libertad 0.
Nov 28: Nacional 1 Sportivo Luqueno 0; Tacuary 1 12 de Octubre 0.
Nov 29: Cerro Porteno 1 3 de Febrero 1; Guarani 3 Olimpia 1; 2 de Mayo 1 Libertad 2; Sol de America 3 Rubio Nu 2.

KENYA

Debut-season success

Sofapaka, a team started by refugees who took sanctuary under a church organisation in Nairobi after escaping conflict in eastern Congo DR two years ago, won the Kenya Premier League in their first season in the top flight.

They sealed the title with goals from John Baraza (two) and Robson Dondo in a 3-0 victory over Red Berets and will now compete in next year's lucrative African Champions League.

NIGERIA

Owoeri tests positive

Beaten African Champions League finalists Heartland could lose striker John Owoeri for up to two years after he tested positive for a banned substance following a group game against Etoile du Sahal.

Suspended...Owoeri

Owoeri was conspicuous by his absence in both the semi-final win against Kano Pillars and the Final defeat to Mazembe – who he scored against in a 2-0 group win.

ZAMBIA

Triple for Nyirenda

Zanaco finished top of the league after beating Kabwe Warriors 1-0 on the final day of the season to win their fifth championship in eight years.

Victory means Zanaco coach Wedson Nyirenda has now won three successive titles, having guided ZESCO United to the Zambian Premier League in 2007 and 2008, before moving to Lusaka-based Zanaco this season.

Zanaco will enter the 2010 African Champions League, while ZESCO United will go into the Confederations Cup.

PARAGUAY – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional	20	12	4	4	28	14	40
Libertad	20	11	4	5	29	18	37
Guarani	20	10	5	5	24	16	35
Rubio Nu	20	9	7	4	26	19	34
Olimpia	20	10	1	9	30	22	31
Cerro Porteno	20	7	8	5	21	20	29
Tacuary	20	8	4	8	23	30	28
3 de Febrero	20	6	5	9	22	32	23
2 de Mayo	20	6	4	10	24	23	22
Sol America	20	6	3	11	22	29	21
5 Luqueno	20	5	4	11	18	29	19
12 de Octubre	20	5	1	14	15	30	16

PERU

Group stage

Nov 4: Huancayo 2 Coronel Bolognesi 1; Total Chalaco 0 Al Atletico 0; Sport Ancash 2 Al Lima 0; Sporting Cristal 3 Jose Galvez 2; Universitario 2 Cienciano 0; Juan Aurich 2 Inti Gas 0; Melgar 0 Univ SMP 1; Colegio Nacional 1 Cesar Vallejo 1.
Nov 7: Al Atletico 4 Melgar 1; Jose Galvez 3 Juan Aurich 1.
Nov 8: Inti Gas 2 Colegio Nacional 1; Cienciano 3 Huancayo 0; Al Lima 1 Sporting Cristal 0; Coronel Bolognesi 2 Total Chalaco 2; Cesar Vallejo 1 Sport Ancash 1.
Nov 14: Juan Aurich 2 Alianza Lima 1; Inti Gas 1 Sport Ancash 0; Huancayo 1 Univ SMP 0; Universitario 4 Alianza Atletico 0; Coronel Bolognesi 1 Melgar 0.
Nov 15: Sporting Cristal 1 Cesar Vallejo 3; Jose Galvez 1 Colegio Nacional 3; Cienciano 4 Total Chalaco 1.
Nov 21: Al Atletico 2 Cienciano 0; Univ SMP 2 Coronel Bolognesi 1; Melgar 3 Huancayo 1; Colegio Nacional 3 Sporting Cristal 1.
Nov 22: Sport Ancash 1 Juan Aurich 0; Al Lima 3 Inti Gas 1; Total Chalaco 0 Universitario 3; Cesar Vallejo 2 Jose Galvez 0.
Nov 25: Univ SMP 1 Universitario 0.
Nov 29: Jose Galvez 0 Al Lima 1; Al Atletico 2 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Total Chalaco 2 Melgar 2; Cesar Vallejo 3 Inti Gas 1; Sporting Cristal 0 Juan Aurich 1; Colegio Nacional 1 Sport Ancash 0; Universitario 5 Huancayo 0; Cienciano 1 Univ SMP 1.

PERU – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza Lima	43	22	9	12	57	44	75
Juan Aurich	43	19	14	10	58	44	71
Cesar Vallejo	43	17	15	11	58	49	66
Inti Gas	43	17	10	16	56	50	61
S Cristal	43	16	9	18	71	54	57
Jose Galvez	43	15	7	21	42	57	52
Colegio	43	14	8	21	39	56	50
Sport Ancash	43	12	9	22	38	61	45

PERU – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Universitario	43	23	12	8	58	27	81
Univ SMP*	43	18	16	9	64	46	69
Huancayo	43	20	7	16	61	57	67
Cienciano	43	14	15	14	56	61	57
Melgar	43	14	13	16	54	62	55
Total Chalaco	43	12	15	16	62	61	51
Al Atletico	43	11	13	19	42	58	46
C Bolognesi	43	7	14	22	40	74	35

*1pt deducted

URUGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 7: Nacional 3 Rampla Juniors 0; Defensor 1 Racing 1; Atenas 0 Central Espanol 0.
Nov 8: Liverpool 2 Cerro 0; Cerro Largo 0 Wanderers 0; Tacuarembo 2 River Plate 1; Fenix 4 Danubio 1; Cerrito 2 Penarol 2.
Nov 21: Penarol 1 Fenix 0; Racing 4 Tacuarembo 1; Rampla Juniors 4 Atenas 1.
Nov 22: Wanderers 0 Liverpool 0; Central Espanol 2 Cerrito 2; Danubio 0 Nacional 2; Cerro 1 Defensor 4.
Nov 25: River Plate 1 Cerro Largo 4.

URUGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional*	12	10	0	2	27	9	27
Liverpool	12	7	4	1	27	11	25
Defensor	12	7	3	2	22	11	24
Penarol	12	6	5	1	21	13	23
Wanderers	12	6	4	2	19	8	22
Racing	12	5	4	3	22	15	19
Danubio	12	5	2	5	21	21	17
Cerrito	12	3	6	3	17	15	15
Rampla Jrs	12	4	3	5	12	18	15
River Plate	11	3	5	3	16	16	14
Cerro Largo	12	3	3	6	13	14	12
Tacuarembo	12	3	0	8	12	21	12
C Espanol	12	1	6	5	12	23	9
Cerro	11	2	2	7	11	23	8
Atenas	12	2	2	8	5	25	8
Fenix	12	1	3	8	9	20	6

*3pts deducted

VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 5: Tachira 1 Caracas 0.
Nov 8: Centro Italo 1 Esppor 1; El Vigia 2 Yaracuyanos 2; Llaneros 0 Dep Italia 3; Monagas 2 Zulia 2; Mineros 1 Anzoategui 0; Lara 2 Tachira 0; Trujillanos 0 Zamora 0; Caracas 2 Carabobo 1; Araguа 1 Estudiantes 1.
Nov 14: Anzoategui 2 Monagas 1.
Nov 15: Esppor 0 Caracas 3; Tachira 4 Mineros 1; Carabobo 1 Aragua 1; Zulia 3 Trujillanos 1; Zamora 4 Llaneros 3; Yaracuyanos 0 Lara 0; Italia 3 Centro Italo 1; Estudiantes 2 El Vigia 0.
Nov 22: Monagas 0 Tachira 1; Trujillanos 2 Anzoategui 1; Llaneros 3 Zulia 4; Centro Italo 2 Zamora 0; Mineros 1 Yaracuyanos 0; Caracas 0 Italia 1; Aragua 1 Esppor 0; El Vigia 4 Carabobo 2; Lara 1 Estudiantes 1.
Nov 25: Zamora 0 Anzoategui 1.
Nov 29: Tachira 0 Trujillanos 0; Anzoategui 4 Llaneros 1; Zulia 2 Centro Italo 1; Zamora 3 Caracas 1; Yaracuyanos 2 Monagas 1; Italia 1 Aragua 1; Esppor 0 El Vigia 1; Carabobo 2 Lara 2; Estudiantes 3 Mineros 1.

VENEZUELA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italia	15	10	3	2	23	12	33
Caracas	15	10	2	3	31	12	32
Tachira	15	9	4	2	22	7	31
Trujillanos	15	7	4	4	24	17	25
Lara	15	6	6	3	21	13	24
Anzoategui	15	7	2	6	20	18	23
Monagas	15	6	3	6	30	28	21
Zulia	15	6	3	6	26	25	21
Mineros	15	6	3	6	19	20	21
Zamora	15	6	3	6	19	26	21
El Vigia	15	6	2	7	24	28	20
Aragua	15	4	6	5	11	17	18
Yaracuyanos	15	5	3	7	16	23	18
Estudiantes	15	3	8	4	17	13	17
Esppor	15	4	4	7	11	19	16
Centro Italo	15	2	5	8	18	25	11
Carabobo	15	1	7	7	13	25	10
Llaneros	15	1	4	10	17	34	7

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Arabe Unido (Pan) v Cruz Azul (Mex)
Columbus Crew (USA) v Toluca (Mex)
Comunicaciones (Gtm) v Pachuca (Mex)
Marathon (Hnd) v Pumas UNAM (Mex)
1st legs - March 9-11; 2nd legs - March 16-18

Semi-finals draw

Columbus Crew OR Toluca v Comunicaciones OR Pachuca
Marathon OR Pumas UNAM v Arabe Unido OR Cruz Azul
1st legs - March 30-April 1; 2nd legs - April 6-8

MEXICO

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP
Group stage

Nov 4: Jaguares 1 Morelia 2; Pachuca 1 Cruz Azul 3; Queretaro 1 Tigres 0; Tecos 1 San Luis 1; Guadalajara 2 Indios 2; Monterrey 2 Santos 1; Puebla 1 Atlas 0; Atlante 3 Toluca 2.
Nov 5: Pumas 3 America 2.
Nov 7: Cruz Azul 4 Puebla 0; San Luis 4 Santos 2; Indios 0 Jaguares 1; Tigres 4 Atlante 0; Atlas 1 Guadalajara 4.
Nov 8: Toluca 3 Pachuca 0; Morelia 0 Pumas 0; Tecos 2 Queretaro 0; America 1 Monterrey 0.
Nov 14: Puebla 0 Toluca 2; Pachuca 1 Tigres 1; Monterrey 1 Morelia 1; Jaguares 2 Atlas 3; Guadalajara 0 Cruz Azul 1; Queretaro 4 San Luis 0; Atlante 0 Tecos 0.
Nov 15: Pumas 1 Indios 1; Santos 1 America 1.

MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca	17	11	2	4	32	19	35
San Luis	17	5	6	6	21	24	21
Guadalajara	17	5	4	8	23	29	19
Atlas	17	5	3	9	14	25	18
Queretaro	17	5	3	9	17	29	18
Indios	17	0	6	11	7	26	6

MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morelia	17	10	3	4	31	15	33
America	17	8	6	3	29	16	30
Monterrey	17	9	3	5	27	16	30
Puebla	17	6	3	3	19	19	26
Pachuca	17	7	3	7	24	29	24
Jaguares	17	5	4	8	17	22	19

MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	17	11	0	6	35	19	33
Santos	17	7	6	4	29	24	27
Atlante	17	7	2	8	18	23	23
Tigres	17	5	7	5	23	18	22
Tecos	17	5	5	7	23	29	20
Pumas	17	4	5	8	16	23	17

Top two in each group and the two other teams with the most points qualified for the quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Nov 21/22; 2nd legs - Nov 28/29
Monterrey v America
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Puebla v Cruz Azul
4-4, 2-3 (agg 6-7)
San Luis v Toluca
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1; Toluca through because of better group stage record)
Santos v Morelia
2-1, 0-3 (agg 2-4)

UNITED STATES

See page 89

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final, 1st leg

Nov 1
Heartland (Nig) 2 (Osanga 24, Agba 76)
TP Mazembe (DRC) 1 (Mputu 22)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Abd El Fatah (Egy)

Final, 2nd leg

Nov 7
TP Mazembe 1 (Omodiagbe og 73)
Heartland 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Benouza (Alg)
Sent off: Nwanna (Heartland)
Agg 2-2. TP Mazembe on away goals.

CONFEDERATION CUP

Final, 1st leg

Nov 29
ES Setif (Alg) 2 (Ziaya 14, 80)
Stade Malien (Mli) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)

EGYPT

Nov 21: Assyut 0 Haras Hedood 1; ENPPI 2 Mehalla 2.
Nov 24: Gouna 1 Jaish 1; Ittihad 1 Shorta 0; Ismaili 2 Entag Harby 1; Petrojet 0 Ahly 1.
Nov 25: Mansoura 4 Assyut 0; ENPPI 1 Masry 1; Mokawloon 2 Haras Hedood 0; Zamalek 0 Mehalla 1.
Nov 29: Assyut 1 ENPPI 1; Shorta 2 Zamalek 0; Mehalla 0 Ismaili 1; Haras Hedood 0 Ittihad 1; Jaish 3 Mansoura 1; Entag Harby 2 Gouna 0; Masry 0 Petrojet 1; Ahly 2 Mokawloon 0.

EGYPT

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ahly	10	8	2	0	18	6	26
Petrojet	10	6	2	2	17	10	20
Ismaili	10	5	4	1	14	10	19
Jaish	10	5	3	2	20	14	18
Entag Harby	10	4	3	3	16	11	15
ENPPI	10	3	4	3	13	16	13
Shorta	10	3	3	4	11	11	12
Haras Hedood	10	3	3	4	12	15	12
Mokawloon	10	2	5	3	11	12	11
Zamalek	10	3	2	5	11	13	11
Gouna	10	2	5	3	10	13	11
Ittihad	10	3	2	5	7	11	11
Mansoura	10	2	4	4	13	12	10
Masry	10	2	4	4	11	14	10
Mehalla	10	2	4	4	6	12	10
Assyut	10	0	4	6	5	15	4

SOUTH AFRICA

Nov 4: Free State Stars 1 AmaZulu 0; Arrows 1 Celtic 1; SuperSport 1 Platinum Stars 1; Pirates 1 Maritzburg 1; Aces 3 Chiefs 3; Cosmos 0 Ajax 1; Swallows 0 Sundowns 1; Santos 0 Wits 0.
Nov 7: Arrows 1 Sundowns 0; Platinum Stars 3 Wits 1; SuperSport 4 AmaZulu 2; Santos 4

Cup winners...Kuwait SC

KUWAIT

Continental first

Kuwait SC became the first team from the country to win the AFC Cup since its conception back in 2004.

Playing the Final on home turf – in a one-off game after it had previously been decided over two legs – Kuwait beat Syria's Al Karamah 2-1 with an Ismail Al Ajmi header deep into added time.

MALAYSIA

Riot ruins big day

Negeri Sembilan's 61-year wait to regain the Malaysia Cup was overshadowed by rioting fans of Kelantan, who set fire to flags and seats after their 3-1 defeat in the Final.

SOUTH KOREA

Penalty shoot-out

Suwon Bluewings beat Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 extra-time deadlock in the Korean FA Cup Final.

Triumph...Negeri Sembilan

TURKMENISTAN

Super Cup victory

League champions MTTU beat Altyn Asyr 3-0 to win the Super Cup. Altyn Asyr, who were only founded in 2008, had beaten Merw Mary 3-0 in the Turkmenistan Cup Final.

Maritzburg 0; Cosmos 1 Swallows 2; Free State Stars 0 Chiefs 1.
Nov 8: Aces 1 Ajax 2; Pirates 3 Celtic 1.
Nov 20: Wits 1 AmaZulu 2; Santos 0 Chiefs 1.
Nov 21: SuperSport 3 Maritzburg 2; Platinum Stars 2 Cosmos 0; Arrows 1 Swallows 3; Pirates 3 Ajax 0.
Nov 22: Aces 0 Sundowns 1; Free State Stars 0 Celtic 1.
Nov 24: Cosmos 0 Arrows 1.
Nov 25: Ajax 0 Free State Stars 0; AmaZulu 2 Platinum Stars 1; Maritzburg 1 Wits 1; Chiefs 0 SuperSport 2; Celtic 1 Santos 1; Sundowns 2 Pirates 0; Swallows 1 Aces 1.
Nov 28: Aces 0 Cosmos 0; Free State Stars 2 Sundowns 2; SuperSport 0 Celtic 0; Platinum Stars 2 Arrows 1; Pirates 2 Swallows 2; Santos 1 Ajax 0.
Nov 29: Wits 0 Chiefs 3; AmaZulu 0 Maritzburg 1.

SOUTH AFRICA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SuperSport	18	10	7	1	35	16	37
Santos	18	8	7	3	21	10	31
Sundowns	18	8	5	5	27	18	29
Ajax	18	8	5	5	14	15	29
Chiefs	18	8	4	6	22	16	28
Pirates	18	7	7	4	19	13	28
Celtic	18	6	9	3	22	19	27
Swallows	18	7	4	7	19	20	25
Platinum Stars	18	6	4	8	16	16	22
Arrows	18	4	10	4	16	18	22
Wits	18	4	9	5	24	25	21
Maritzburg	18	4	8	6	18	27	20
AmaZulu	18	5	3	10	17	27	18
F S Stars	18	2	11	5	15	17	17
Aces	18	3	6	9	13	24	15
Cosmos	18	1	7	10	13	30	10

TUNISIA

Nov 20: Esperance Tunis 4 Kairouanaise 0.
Nov 21: Olympique 3 Kasserine 1; Hammam-Sousse 1 Stade Tunisien 1.
Nov 22: Etoile Sahel 2 Club Africain 2; Esperance Zarzis 1 Monastir 1; Hammam-Lif 1 Bizertin 0.
Nov 25: Gafsa 0 Sfaxien 2.
Nov 26: Club Africain 1 Hammam-Sousse 0.
Nov 28: Kairouanaise 2 Monastir 1; Etoile Sahel 3 Gafsa 0; Kasserine 0 Esperance Zarzis 1; Sfaxien 1 Hammam-Lif 1; Stade Tunisien 1 Olympique 0; Bizertin 2 Esperance Tunis 2.

TUNISIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance T	11	9	1	1	33	8	28
Club Africain	11	7	3	1	10	3	24
Sfaxien	11	6	3	2	17	9	21
Stade Tunisien	11	6	3	2	13	8	21
Etoile Sahel	11	6	2	3	22	11	20
Bizertin	11	4	5	2	14	11	17
Kairouanaise	11	5	0	6	7	13	15
Monastir	11	2	5	4	13	13	11
Olympique	11	3	2	6	8	14	11
Esperance Z	11	3	2	6	8	17	11
Gafsa	11	2	4	5	8	18	10
Ham-Lif	11	2	2	7	12	18	8
Ham-Sousse	11	2	2	7	10	18	8
Kasserine	11	2	2	7	8	22	8

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final

Nov 7 - Tokyo
Al Ittihad (Sau) 1 (Noor 74)
Pohang Steelers (SKo) 2 (No Byung-jun 57, Kim Hyung-il 66)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,743. **Ref:** Breeze (Aus)
Al Ittihad: Zaid - Al Shamrani (Leguizamon 64), Al Saqri, Al Montashari, Abushgair, Abouchrouane, Al Mukhaini, Khariri, Noor, Chermiti, Fallatah.
Pohang: Shin Hwa-yong - Hwang Jae-won, Kim Hyung-il, Choi Hyo-jin, Kim Tae-su, Kim Jae-sung, Kim Jung-kyum (Park Hee-chul 75), Shin Hyung-min, Ristic (Song Chang-ho 71), Denilson (Nam Kung-do 90), No Byung-jin.

AFC CUP

Final

Nov 3 - Kuwait City
Kuwait SC (Kuw) 2 (Balhous og 16, Al Ajmi 90+)
Al Karama (Syr) 1 (Al Shibli 82)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,400. **Ref:** Moradi (Irn)
Sent off: Al Marlah (Kuwait SC) 90+min

AUSTRALIA

Regular season

Nov 4: Wellington 3 Newcastle 0.
Nov 6: Adelaide 0 Brisbane 2.
Nov 7: Melbourne 0 Central Coast 4; Gold Coast 1 Sydney 0.
Nov 8: Wellington 1 Perth 1; Newcastle 2 North Queensland 0.
Nov 20: Adelaide 1 Gold Coast 1.
Nov 21: Brisbane 0 Melbourne 1; North Queensland 1 Central Coast 5.
Nov 22: Perth 2 Sydney 0; Newcastle 0 Wellington 1.
Nov 27: Central Coast 0 Perth 0.
Nov 28: Melbourne 4 Gold Coast 0; North Queensland 2 Adelaide 1.
Nov 29: Sydney 1 Newcastle 3; Brisbane 4 Wellington 1.

AUSTRALIA – REGULAR	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melbourne	16	9	3	4	27	22	30
Sydney	16	8	1	7	20	17	25
Central Coast	16	6	6	4	22	9	24
Gold Coast	16	7	3	6	21	25	24
Perth	16	6	4	6	21	18	22
Wellington	16	4	8	4	22	19	20
Brisbane	16	5	4	7	22	23	19
Newcastle	16	5	4	7	17	23	19
N Queensland	16	4	6	6	18	28	18
Adelaide	16	4	5	7	14	20	17

IRAN

Nov 5: Persepolis 2 AbooMoslem 1.
Nov 6: Saba 0 Malavan 1; Peykan 1 Sepahan 4; Pas 3 Saipa 1; Esteghlal Ahvaz 2 Teraktor Sazi 3.
Nov 7: Mes 2 Steel Azin 6; Zob-Ahan 1 Foolad 0; Shahin 0 Moghavemat 0; Rah-Ahan 3 Esteghlal Tehran 2.
Nov 27: Moghavemat 2 Rah-Ahan 1; Teraktor Sazi 2 Pas 2; Steel Azin 0 Esteghlal Ahvaz 1; Foolad 0 Shahin 0; Saipa 2 Saba 0; Malavan 0 Zob-Ahan 1.
Nov 29: AbooMoslem 1 Mes 0; Sepahan 2 Persepolis 1; Esteghlal Tehran 2 Peykan 3.

IRAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sepahan	17	10	4	3	30	14	34
Zob-Ahan	17	9	6	2	27	16	33
Peykan	17	7	7	3	22	17	28
Esteghlal T	17	7	6	4	24	16	27
Moghavemat	17	6	9	2	23	16	27
Steel Azin	17	7	6	4	29	24	27
Persepolis	17	6	8	3	27	22	26
Teraktor Sazi	17	6	6	5	24	23	24
Esteghlal A	17	6	6	5	26	26	24
Malavan	17	6	6	5	16	22	24
Saba	17	6	2	9	23	25	20
Saipa	17	5	5	7	22	28	20
Mes	17	5	4	8	27	33	19
Rah-Ahan	17	4	6	7	21	25	18
Shahin	17	3	8	6	21	24	17
Pas	17	3	5	9	18	26	14
Foolad	17	1	8	8	9	18	11
AbooMoslem	17	1	8	8	13	27	11

JAPAN

Nov 8: Nagoya 1 Vissel 0; Kawasaki 3 JEF 2; Tokyo 0 Urawa 1; Kashima 2 Montedio 0; Jubilo 0 Albirex 2; Gamba 4 Kyoto 1; Yokohama 1 Oita 2; Omiya 0 Sanfrecce 1; Kashiwa 5 Shimizu 0.
Nov 21: Montedio 0 Omiya 0; Urawa 3 Jubilo 2; Albirex 0 Kashiwa 1; Shimizu 0 Gamba 2; Kyoto 0 Kashima 1; Vissel 2 Yokohama 2; Sanfrecce 0 Nagoya 0.
Nov 22: JEF 2 Tokyo 1; Oita 1 Kawasaki 0.
Nov 28: Kashima 5 Gamba 1; Kawasaki 1 Albirex 0; Jubilo 0 Sanfrecce 1; Nagoya 2 Montedio 0; Kyoto 1 Urawa 0; Omiya 1 Kashiwa 1; Tokyo 1 Vissel 0.
Nov 29: Yokohama 2 Shimizu 0; JEF 0 Oita 2.

JAPAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kashima	33	19	6	8	50	30	63
Kawasaki	33	18	7	8	61	38	61
Gamba	33	17	6	10	60	44	57
Sanfrecce	33	14	11	8	49	43	53
Tokyo	33	16	4	13	46	38	52
Urawa	33	16	4	13	43	42	52
Shimizu	33	13	11	9	44	41	50
Albirex	33	13	10	10	41	30	49
Nagoya	33	14	7	12	46	42	49
Yokohama	33	11	12	10	43	37	45
Kyoto	33	11	8	14	34	43	41
Jubilo	33	11	7	15	46	58	40
Omiya	33	9	11	13	39	46	38
Vissel	33	10	8	15	39	47	38
Montedio	33	10	8	15	32	40	38
Kashiwa	33	7	13	13	39	54	34
Oita	33	8	5	20	25	44	29
JEF	33	5	12	16	32	54	27

SOUTH KOREA

Championship play-offs – 1st round

Nov 21: Seoul 1 Chunnam 1 (aet; Chunnam 3-2 on pens).
Nov 22: Songnam 1 Incheon 1 (aet; Songnam 3-2 on pens.
Winners progressed to 2nd round

2nd round

Nov 25: Songnam 1 Chunnam 0.
Songnam qualified to meet regular season runners-up Pohang

3rd round

Nov 29: Pohang 0 Songnam 1.
Songnam qualified to meet regular season champions Chonbuk in the Final

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Oct 17: Auckland City (NZ) 5 Manu Ura (Tah) 0.
Oct 24: Magenta (NC) 1 Waitakere United (NZ) 1.
Nov 7: Waitakere United 2 Manu Ura 0.
Nov 8: Auckland City 2 Magenta 1.
Nov 27: Manu Ura 1 Magenta 1.
Nov 28: Waitakere United 1 Auckland City 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
Waitakere	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Magenta	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Manu Ura	3	0	1	2	1	6	1

Group B
Oct 17: Tafea (Van) 3 Hekari United (PNG) 3.
Oct 18: Marist (Sol) 1 Lautoka (Fiji) 3.
Nov 7: Hekari United 1 Lautoka 2; Marist 0 Tafea 2.
Nov 29: Lautoka 1 Tafea 2.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tafea	3	2	1	0	7	4	7
Lautoka	3	2	0	1	6	4	6
Hekari United	2	0	1	1	4	5	1
Marist	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

Group winners qualify for the Final

R (in tables) = relegated

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

The prize...African Nations Cup

January 6
Asian Cup qualifiers
January 10
African Nations Cup starts
January 17
Asian Cup qualifiers
January 20
Asian Cup qualifiers
January 31
African Nations Cup Final; Argentina closing championship starts

Famous Last Words

Who said what and why

"He's the worst French coach since Louis XVI"

Eric Cantona (left) stops just short of calling for the guillotine for France boss Raymond Domenech (right)

"I did not know that Louis XVI was a coach"
Domenech's weak riposte to Cantona

"After a free-kick, William Gallas received the ball and scored from close in"
Making no mention of Thierry Henry's hand in their description of Gallas' controversial play-off winner, the French federation website goes for some totalitarian regime reporting

"What goes around comes around"
Ipswich Town manager Roy Keane twists the knife when asked for his views on the Republic of Ireland's play-off defeat by France

"When I'm 60, I will not be in a disco at six in the morning. But now I can do it"
Incorrigible Real Madrid star Guti reacts to criticism of his unprofessional lifestyle

"It's the fault of our sponsors"
Kurban Berdyev, the coach of Russian champions Rubin Kazan, passes the buck when asked why his players had not been paid for three months

Stubborn buddies... Mourinho and Sneijder

"Top teams in the Champions League have at least eight players who have learned to play their position, who are confident and competitive. I don't see these eight players here"
Bayern Munich defender Philipp Lahm's criticism earned him a club-record fine

"The sons of foreigners have given Swiss sides a winning mentality they didn't have before"
Gilles Grimandi, the former Arsenal defender turned club scout, sees Switzerland's triumph at the Under-17 World Cup as a victory for immigration

"We have a special bond after three months. I am very satisfied with [Jose] Mourinho – we are both equally pig-headed"
Internazionale's Wesley Sneijder finds common ground with his coach

"No excuses; they gave us a lesson in humility"
Real Madrid skipper Raul tells it like it is after a humiliating Spanish Cup defeat at the hands of third-tier Alcorcon

"I don't think what George wanted to do got across to some players. Also, some of them are too thick to take it on board and not good enough to take it on board anyway, to be honest"
Ex-international Craig Burley thinks he knows who's to blame for his uncle, George Burley, getting sacked as Scotland manager

"I've had problems with him for four months. Enough is enough. There's a limit to everything. Our relationship is over"
Unhappy Bayern Munich striker Luca Toni confirms what was common knowledge: he and coach Louis Van Gaal do not get on

Heavens above...fed-up Toni

"Our supporters should follow the example of those in England"
Russia star Andrei Arshavin blames the World Cup play-off defeat by Slovenia on an absence of fanatical backing in the first leg in Moscow

"I don't go to nightclubs as much, I eat less pasta and no longer drink five cokes a day"
Anderlecht striker Jonathan Legear explains his new-found form

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